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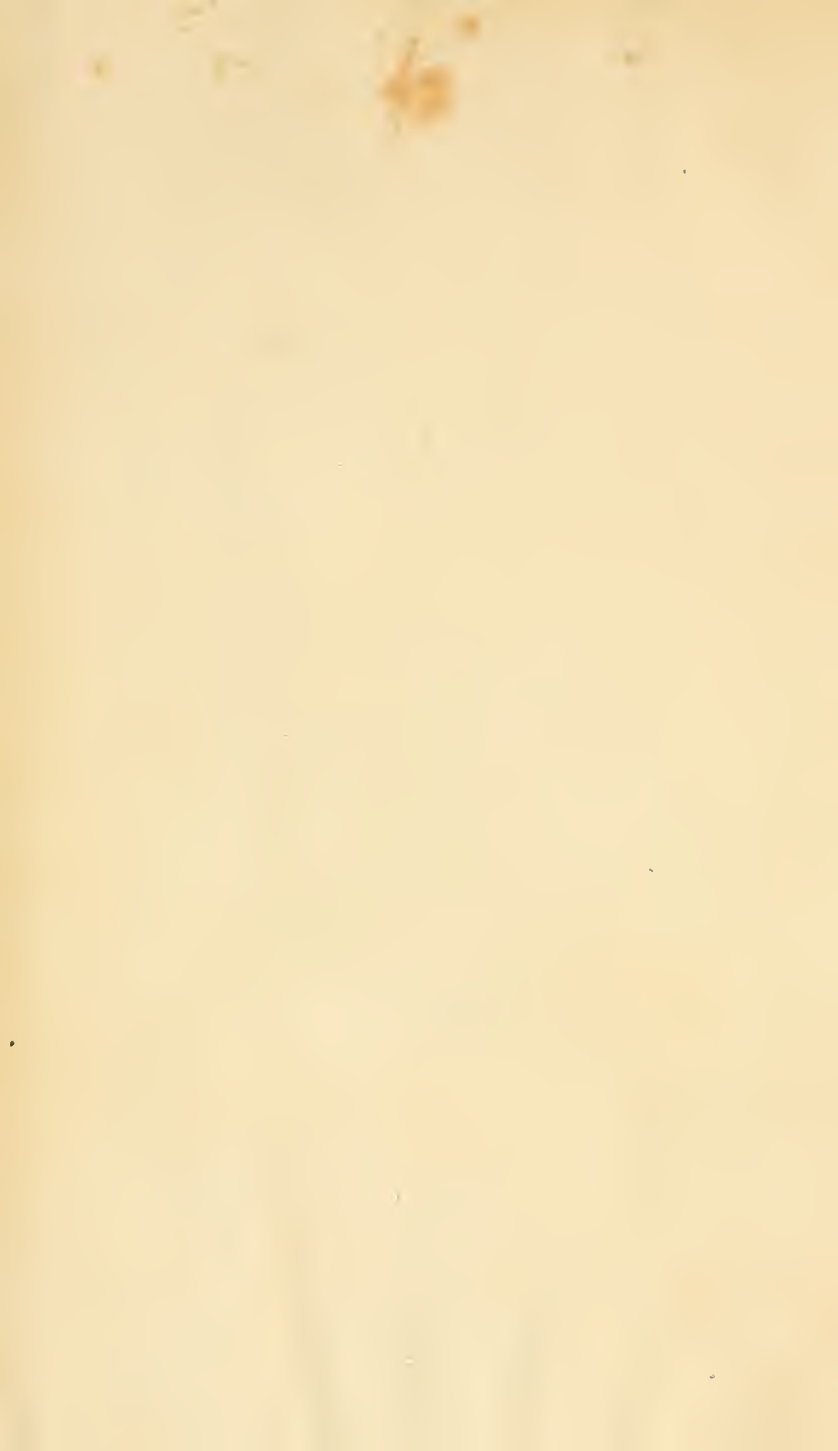
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THE

HISTORY AND MYSTERY

OF

METHODIST EPISCOPACY,

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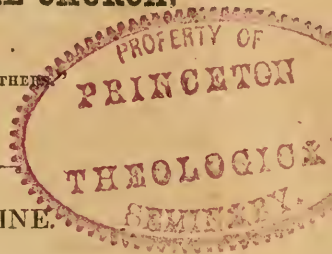
A GLANCE AT

"THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHURCH.

AS WE RECEIVED THEM FROM OUR FATHERS.

✓
BY ALEXANDER M'CABINE.

ELDER IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.



We can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth.....*St. Paul.*

He who has no right to the thing he possesses, cannot prescribe or plead any length of time, to make his possession lawful.....*Dr. Barrow.*

BALTIMORE :

PRINTED BY RICHARD J. MATCHETT.

.....
1827.

DISTRICT OF MARYLAND, TO WIT:—

[L. S.] BE IT REMEMBERED, that on this thirtieth day of March, in the fifty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States of America, ALEXANDER M'CAINE of the said District, hath deposited in this office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, to wit:—

“The History and Mystery of Methodist Episcopacy; or, a Glance at “the Institutions of the Church, as we received them from our fathers.” By Alexander M'Caïne, Elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

We can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth.—*St. Paul.*

He who has no right to the thing he possesses, cannot prescribe or plead any length of time, to make his possession lawful.—*Dr. Barrow.*”

In conformity with the act of Congress, of the United States, entitled “An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;” and also to the Act, entitled “An Act supplementary to the Act, entitled An Act, for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof, to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.

PHILIP MOORE,

Clerk of the District of Maryland.

PREFACE.

It may be thought extraordinary, that the writer of the following essay, should call in question, the validity of the claims of the bishops and travelling preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, after having himself been a preacher in connexion with them, for upwards of thirty years.

Previous to the general conference of 1824, his attention had been invited to a consideration of the complaints and demands, of the laity and local ministers; and being fully convinced of the justice of those demands, he could not avoid looking with deep solicitude to the fate of the many memorials, which were about to be sent up to the general conference. After the conference had risen, a circular appeared, in which, they declare, they "know no such rights, they comprehend no such privileges" as were asserted in the memorials, praying for *Representation*. To those who urged the necessity of introducing the representative principle into the legislative department of the church, no room was left to hope, that any abatement would be made, at a future day, in the pretensions of the travelling preachers; for the conference declared, in terms sufficiently intelligible, their purpose to have and to hold forever, all power, legislative, judicial and executive, as a legacy which they had inherited from their "fathers."

Such declarations, coming from the general conference, were sufficient to rouse every man who knows how to respect his rights, whether civil or religious. The writer of this essay was alarmed at such declarations, because he considered them to be indications of priestly domination; and moreover, he considered them offensive, because they were addressed to citizens of these United States. New thoughts were waked up, and forebodings felt, which he had never before experienced. He determined, therefore, to examine the grounds of such unheard of claims. He was resolved, if possible, to ascertain, the means by which travelling preachers had arrived at these pretensions, and find the authority which Mr. Wesley had given to justify them in saying, he "recommended the episcopal mode of church government." When, lo! the first discovery he made, was, that whilst Mr. Wesley the testator, was yet living, the title

✓ of bishop was assumed, and the episcopal mode of government adopted without his recommendation; and more, that his most solemn remonstrance and entreaty did not avail in causing them to relinquish the one, or change the other. Still pursuing the investigation, he found, that a more extended research served only to increase his conviction, that claims had been set up, for which there was no warrant; and authority was said to have been given, which, he believes, can no where be found.

The result of his investigation was read before the Union Society of reformers in Baltimore; and the writer was requested to print it for the information of his brethren. But before he would consent to its publication, he thought it would be fair and honourable to apprise the bishops of his purpose, and signify to them the probable effect it would have, on the *office* which they fill. He accordingly addressed to each of them the letter No. I. in the appendix; but from neither of them, has he received one word in reply. Failing to obtain information from this quarter, he addressed the letter No. II. in the appendix to each of six of the oldest preachers in the connexion, men who were in the general conference of 1784. And from the answers he has received from them, collated with other documents, he is fully established in the opinion that there never was a document, letter or paper, received from Mr. Wesley, in which he recommended the episcopal mode of church government, to the American Methodists.

In presenting this view of the origin of our episcopacy to his readers, he wishes it to be distinctly understood, that the doctrines of the Methodists—the general rules which have had their approbation since the days of Mr. Wesley, and which indeed are an epitome of the gospel rules of morality and vital godliness—class meetings—love-feasts, &c have his unqualified approbation. That having, himself, been twice in the travelling connexion, he heartily approves of an itinerant ministry. And that he has no personal misunderstanding, with either of the bishops, nor any other man in authority.

✓ It may be asked, what are his reasons then, for making this publication? He will answer this question candidly. He felt it to be his duty to make this investigation, and having made it, he now feels it his duty to set forth the measures that were taken to lay the foundation of claims which are so much at variance with the rights of the people. He thinks, by having these things before them, the laity and local ministry, may be induced to persevere in demanding their rights, the enjoyment of which, he deems to be necessary to the purity of the ministry and the unity of the church.

He conceives it to be his duty, and the duty of every friend to mutual rights, to resist the first obvious encroachments on the liberties of the people, made by men in power: and to expose the pretensions of those who could hold such language to their equals, as "pardon us if we know no such rights, if we comprehend no such privileges."

He thinks this exposure will tend much to lessen, if it will not totally overcome, the opposition of travelling preachers to "*representation*." For he cannot conceive, how the bishops and present race of travelling preachers, who are clear in this matter, can deny representation to the laity, when they learn by what means their "*fathers*" contrived to monopolize exclusive legislation to themselves. ✓

It is due to Mr. Wesley, that he should be exculpated from the charge of "recommending the episcopal mode of church government" and the creation of bishops, after saying, "Lord King's account of the primitive church, convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order." And especially, after he had expressed himself in the following manner: "Men may call me a *knave*, or a *fool*, a *rascal*, a *scoundrel*, and I am content; but they shall never by my consent call me *bishop*."

It is believed that a community living under the influence of such a form of government as that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, where the members are not permitted to participate in legislation, will sooner or later prefer a monarchical form of civil government to the pure republican institutions of our happy country. And it is desirable that the government should be revised and placed on such a foundation, that the rights of all our ministers and members shall be secured, and that posterity may be able to look back with veneration at the institutions of the church, as they shall have received them from their fathers. ✓

Baltimore, April, 1827.





HISTORY, &c.

SECTION I.

WE hold as incontrovertible truths, that in the different forms of civil government, there are first principles which must be equitable, in order that the government may be secure : they must be known, in order that they may be respected : and, they must be properly administered, in order that they may contribute to the happiness of the people. But, when the principles of a government are unjust or oppressive, it becomes necessary to keep them concealed from the eyes of the multitude ; for the perpetuity of a government founded on such principles, must depend on the ignorance of the people, or on physical force. Hence the necessity of large standing armies in all monarchical and tyrannical governments to keep the people in awe.

The principles of ecclesiastical government, as laid down in the New Testament, are just ; and the divine author of them, has enjoined an examination of them, that their equity may be known. In his word, they stand at an equal distance from ignorance or force ; and they are calculated to promote and secure the happiness of every member of the Christian church.

For a considerable time past, we have thought our ecclesiastical polity is susceptible of great improvement ; and the more closely we have examined the principles of the government of our church, the more fully we are convinced of the correctness of our opinion. We have, it is true, occasionally taken the liberty of expressing our sentiments upon this important point, and are very conscious, that in doing so, we never intended to give any offence. Actuated by the same motives, we again declare, that we disclaim all intention of giving offence by any of the remarks, we shall make in stating our objections to the present form of church government. And, from the part we have, hitherto, taken in the work of reform, we conceive it is a duty we owe to God and truth—to ourselves and our children—to the church to which we belong—nay to the whole Christian community, to be explicit and candid in stating our objections.

In the year 1784, Dr. Coke received authority from Mr. John Wesley to visit these United States, for the purpose of superintending the societies which were at that time formed, and of ordaining

ministers to administer the sacraments to the same. He was invested by Mr. Wesley, with an authority to *superintend* the said societies, not to *create* any new ecclesiastical officer, unknown to the primitive church. As soon as the Doctor arrived in the United States, he hastened to meet Mr. Asbury ; and upon their first interview, " they consulted together about the plan," by which the church should be governed ; (see Rev'd. J. Lee's history of Methodism, page 93) and accordingly, in a short time thereafter, the preachers who met in conference in Baltimore, formed themselves into an episcopal church, and said, that in doing so, they "*followed the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the Episcopal mode of church government.*" See the minutes of conference for 1785. Where this "counsel" is to be found, or in what official paper this recommendation is contained, we have never yet been able to find out. And after searching for it for thirty-five years, we are no nearer the discovery now than we were when we commenced the search. No such "counsel" is given by Mr. Wesley in his letter to Dr. Coke, nor in that which he addressed to "Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America." So far from this "counsel" being contained in those official papers, the term "*episcopal*" is not to be found in either of them. Nor is there any expression, coming from Mr. Wesley's pen, which we have ever seen, in those papers, or elsewhere, that would justify us in saying, he "*recommended*" the Episcopal form of church government to the Methodist societies in the United States.

As it is to our episcopacy we attribute the rupture which took place between Mr. Wesley and the American conference, and as it is to the unscriptural powers claimed and exercised by it, we ascribe the greater part, if not the whole of the troubles and secessions which the church has experienced since it has been organized, it may not be amiss to examine the foundation upon which our episcopal edifice has been erected. And, latterly, our attention has been directed to this point in particular, because the last general conference, in their circular, rested their refusal of representation on *prescription* ; and avowed their determination to support "the institutions of the church as we received them from our fathers." As they denied our right to representation, we deemed it proper to investigate their right to preclude us from it. As they declared they could "not comprehend such privileges" as we aspired after ; we thought it was highly necessary to examine their title to exclusive legislation. While we were revolving this matter over in our mind, "*Moore's life of Wesley*" in which Mr. Wesley's letter to Mr. Asbury under date of Sept. 20th 1788, condemning him and Dr. Coke for assuming the title of bishop, was issued from the press ; and gave us such a view of the subject as we never had before. This letter we have collated with other documents, and it has produced a conviction in our mind, that our brethren's title to their ecclesiastical estate is not quite so valid as they may have supposed it to be. In making this assertion, we are aware of some of the objections which may be preferred against our sentiments. Indeed, we are

prepared to expect something more ; but as a candid inquirer after truth, we are determined to follow her whithersoever she may conduct us. It, surely, would be imposing too heavy a tax on us, for our itinerant brethren to demand a tacit acquiescence in their *pretensions*, under pain of their displeasure ; or to require us, contrary to the dictates of our conscience, to allow them to retain, what we believe belongs to us of right. If they are sure they are able to sustain the high ground they have taken, they may possibly feel a pleasure in being called into open court to substantiate their claims. If they have "a good and sufficient title" they can, and no doubt will produce it. If they decline the call, or are silent upon the subject, the public will be at no loss to perceive to what cause their silence is to be attributed.

In the minutes of conference for 1785, we are told, that in adopting the present form of government, the conference "*followed the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the episcopal mode of church government.*" And in the book of discipline, see chapter I. sec. I. we are informed, that this form was adopted because "*Mr. Wesley preferred the episcopal mode of church government to any other.*" Now, these are the only public records of the society ; and from the above quotations, it will be perceived, that no previous expression of the wishes of the members of the society, nor any scriptural precedent or authority was offered as a reason for the adoption of this particular form ; but it was made to rest *solely and exclusively* on Mr. Wesley's authority. Surely then, it was incumbent on those who gave Mr. Wesley's name as the only sanction for the measure, to have shewn where he gave them such authority. They ought to have told us in what part of his writings he gave the advice, which they say he gave the societies, to adopt the episcopal mode of church government. Unless this is now done, and we are constrained to believe it never can be done, we must demur respecting the authenticity of the fact, and in the meantime we shall proceed to to shew our reasons for so doing.

FIRST. We shall enquire, what views do ecclesiastical writers give us, of an episcopal form of church government ?

SECONDLY. Did Mr. Wesley, by appointing Dr. Coke a superintendent over the Methodist societies in America, intend to constitute him a bishop, and institute for those societies an episcopal form of church government ?

FIRST. What views do ecclesiastical writers give us of an episcopal form of church government ?

1 "Episcopacy is that form of church government in which diocesan bishops are established as distinct from and superior to priests or presbyters." Buck's Theological Dictionary. Art. Episcopacy.

"Episcopalians, in the strict sense of the word, are those who maintain that episcopacy is of apostolic institution, or that the church of Christ has ever been governed by three distinct *orders*, bishops, presbyters or priests, and deacons ;—that no one has a right to execute the ministerial office, without having previously received

a divine commission ;—and the exclusive right of granting this commission is vested in the bishops as successors of the apostles.” R. Adams’s Religious World Displayed, vol. 2. Art. Episcopalians.

“ The question between the Episcopalians and Presbyterians” says the same writer “ is not, what degree of power and splendour the primitive bishops enjoyed, or what might be the precise extent of their dioceses? but simply and solely whether they were the same as the Presbyters, or whether they were a distinct order? The Episcopalians contend for this last opinion.” vol. 2. page 282.

2. “ As bishops and presbyters are distinct officers, so there must be distinct powers appropriated to each of them. For as the notion of an office implies power, so distinct offices do necessarily infer distinct powers.” Archbishop Potter on Church Government. page 197.

3. “ The lineal succession of bishops from the apostles was a thing undoubted. Ibid. page 154.

And again, “ Bishops were ordained in all churches by the apostles, and derived from them in a constant succession.” page 155.

4. “ It is a principle universally established among Episcopalians, that a succession from the apostles in the order of bishops, as an order superior to and distinct from presbyters, is a requisite without which a *valid Christian ministry* cannot be preserved ; and that such bishops alone possess the power of ordaining and commissioning ministers to feed the flock of Christ.”

5. “ There cannot be more than one bishop at the same time in a church ; a second bishop is no bishop at all ; and they who adhere to him, are schismatics and have no title to the church’s communion, or the privileges of the new covenant.” Archbishop Potter. page 161.

“ I shall then lay down as sure, that there was but one supreme bishop in a place, that was the *ὁ Επισκοπος* the bishop, by way of eminency and propriety. The proper pastor and minister of his parish, to whose care and trust the souls of that church or parish over which he presided are principally and more immediately committed. So saith Cyprian, there is but one bishop in a church at a time.” Lord King. page 12.

6. “ For since the distinction of bishops and presbyters has been of divine appointment, it necessarily follows that the power of ordination, which is the chief mark of this distinction was reserved to the bishops by the same appointment.” Potter. page 260.

7 According to the usage of the church of England, “ The Archbishop, by the King’s direction, confirms the bishop, (elected by the dean and chapter) and afterwards consecrates him by imposition of hands, according to the form laid down in the Common Prayer Book. Hence we see, that a bishop differs from an Archbishop in this, that an Archbishop, with bishops, consecrates a bishop, as a bishop with priests, consecrates a priest.” Nicholson’s Encyclopedia. Art. Bishop.

We have here some of the most prominent features of an episcopal church, as laid down by writers of great celebrity. We would

now ask our brethren, who say, Mr. Wesley "recommended the episcopal mode of church government," if there is in any of the letters which he wrote, a single line that would lead us to suppose, that he held any one of the foregoing particulars? Nay, did he not positively say, he did not hold them? What kind of an episcopal government then must it be, that has not in it a single feature of episcopacy as described by ecclesiastical writers?

SECONDLY. We shall now proceed to enquire, whether Mr. Wesley intended by appointing Dr. Coke a superintendent over the Methodist societies in America, to constitute him a bishop, and institute for those societies an episcopal form of church government? We answer, he did not, and assign for our opinion the following reasons.

1. Because, in the document which is given as proof, Mr. Wesley is totally silent on the subject. He did not once use the term "bishop" or "episcopal," in his letter with reference to us; nor did he, as far as we can perceive, express any wish, or give any recommendation to the American Methodists to adopt the episcopal form of government in preference to any other. A fairer opportunity, surely could not have offered, to recommend episcopacy, if he had been inclined to do so: and we are utterly at a loss to conceive, how he could have recommended this particular form of government, and never once have mentioned it by name. As it has been asserted however, that he did recommend it, we shall transcribe the chapter from our book of discipline, in which this assertion is made, and then give Mr. Wesley's letter, that every one may compare these two documents, and judge for himself.

"The preachers and members of our society in general, being convinced that there was a great deficiency of vital religion in the church of England in America, and being in many places destitute of the Christian sacraments, as several of the clergy had forsaken their churches, requested the late Rev. *John Wesley*, to take such measures, in his wisdom and prudence, as would afford them suitable relief in their distress.

In consequence of this, our venerable friend, who under God, had been the father of the great revival of religion now extending over the earth, by the means of the Methodists, determined to ordain ministers for America; and for this purpose, in the year 1784, sent over three regularly ordained clergy: but preferring the *episcopal* mode of church government to any other, he solemnly set apart, by the imposition of his hands, and prayer, one of them, viz. *Thomas Coke*, doctor of civil law, late of Jesus-College, in the University of Oxford, and a presbyter of the Church of England, for the *episcopal* office; and having delivered to him letters of *episcopal* orders, commissioned and directed him to set apart *Francis Asbury*, then general assistant of the Methodist society in America, for the same *episcopal* office, he, the said *Francis Asbury* being first ordained deacon and elder. In consequence of which, the said *Francis Asbury*, was solemnly set apart for the said *episcopal* office, by prayer, and the imposition of the hands of the said *Thomas Coke*, other

regularly ordained ministers assisting in the sacred ceremony. At which time the general conference, held at Baltimore, did unanimously receive the said *Thomas Coke*, and *Francis Asbury* as their *bishops*, being fully satisfied of the validity of their *episcopal* ordination.”
[*Book of Discipline*, chap. 1, sec. 1.]

The following is Mr. Wesley's letter taken from the minutes of Conference for 1785.

“Bristol, September 10th, 1784.

“*To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America.*

“1. By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the British empire, and erected into Independent States. The English government has no authority over them either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the State Assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice: and in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch.

“2. Lord King's account of the primitive church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace's sake; but because I was determined, as little as possible to violate the established order of the national church to which I belonged.

“3. But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, and but few parish ministers. So that for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here therefore my scruples are at an end: and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

“4. I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury, to be joint *Superintendents*,* over our brethren in North America. As also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, to act as *Elders* among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper.

“5. If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

*“As the translators of our version of the bible have used the English word *Bishop* instead of *Superintendent*, it has been thought by us, that it would appear more scriptural to adopt their term *Bishop*.”

"6. It has indeed been proposed, to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object, 1, I desired the bishop of London to ordain one only; but could not prevail: 2, If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3, If they would ordain them *now*, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously, would this entangle us? 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State, and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other.—They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty, wherewith God has so strangely made them free."

JOHN WESLEY."

We have now placed these two documents before our readers, and invite their particular attention to them. The one was written by somebody, we know not by whom, for it has no name affixed to it, and has found its way into our book of discipline. The other was written by Mr. Wesley himself, and bears his signature. The former was written several years after the adoption of the present form of government, which event took place in 1784; and it speaks of Mr. Wesley as "the *late* Rev'd John Wesley" who died in 1791. The latter is dated "Bristol Sept. 10, 1784" and is given (we repeat it) as the sole authority for our episcopal mode of church government. Between the former and the latter, there is manifestly a great disagreement. In the former the term "episcopal" occurs six times, and the word "bishops" once. In the latter, neither "episcopal, nor "bishop," in their application to our church, is to be found at all. We are at a loss to conceive, how it could have been said, that "Mr. Wesley recommended the episcopal mode of church government." when there is not, in this letter, a single word recommendatory of it, from beginning to end. Those who could find such a recommendation here, must have looked through the eyes of Pope Innocent III, who discovered a Pope in the first chapter of Genesis. "For the firmament of heaven (i. e.) of the universal church, God made two great lights, (i. e.) he ordained two dignities or powers, which are the pontifical authority, and the regal power; but that which rules the days, (i. e.) spiritual matters, is the greater, but that which governs carnal things is the lesser."*

Having searched our book of discipline in vain, for a recommendation of the episcopal mode of church government, we shall now examine the prayer book abridged by Mr. W. for the use of "the Methodists in North America." To this work we find the following prefatory remarks, in which there is a recommendation it is true, but it is a recommendation of his abridged edition of the "COMMON PRAYER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND." to be used by the Methodist "Societies in America."

"I believe there is no LITURGY in the world, either in ancient or

* Dr. Barrow on the Pope's supremacy. page 105.

modern language, which breathes more of a solid, scriptural, rational piety than the "COMMON PRAYER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND." And though the main of it was compiled considerably more than two hundred years ago, yet is the language of it, not only, pure, but strong and elegant in the highest degree.

Little alteration is made in the following edition of it (which I recommend to our *societies in America*) except in the following instances :

1. Most of the holydays (so called) are omitted, as at present answering no valuable end.

2. The service of the LORD'S DAY, the length of which has been often complained of, is considerably shortened.

3. Some sentences in the offices of baptism, and for the burial of the dead are omitted. And

4. Many psalms left out, and many parts of the others, as being highly improper for the mouths of a Christian congregation.

JOHN WESLEY."

Bristol, September 9, 1784.

It is obvious that there is nothing about bishops, or episcopacy here ; nor any recommendation of the episcopal mode of church government, nor, indeed, of any government at all. But as it is upon the Prayer Book our episcopal mode of government is made to rest, and as this is the only authority which is attempted to be produced for it ; we shall examine it with such a freedom, as we suppose it would have to undergo in a court of law, if submitted to the good sense of twelve honest and impartial freeholders on oath. We will suppose, then, that a member of our church, an advocate for the present mode of government, is brought into court and is called on to answer the following questions :

Q. To what church do you belong ?

A. To the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Q. What is the form of government of your church ?

A. "It is in fact and name, episcopal."

Q. When was this form of government adopted ?

A. In the year 1784 when the church was organized.

Q. By whom was it adopted ?

A. By the travelling preachers.

Q. Had the societies nothing to do in adopting this mode of government ?

A. They had not.

Q. Am I to understand you to say, that the laity had no representation in the conference, when the church was organized ; and that they were not consulted respecting the mode of government by which the societies were to be governed ?

A. They had no representation in that conference, nor were they consulted about the form of government.

Q. Can you tell why it was, that the travelling preachers adopted the episcopal form of government in preference to any other ?

A. Because Mr. Wesley recommended it.

Q. Is Mr. Wesley's recommendation the only reason you can assign why the travelling preachers adopted it.

A. It is the only reason.

Q. Are you sure there was no other ?

A. I never heard of any other.

Q. As you say Mr. Wesley recommended the episcopal mode of government, can you tell where that recommendation can be found ?

A. In the remarks he makes on the *Liturgy* of the church of England prefixed to his prayer book, printed in London in 1784.

Q. Are you sure Mr. Wesley recommended the episcopal mode of government in these remarks ?

A. I have always understood he did. But I can give his own words.

"I believe there is no *Liturgy* in the world, either in ancient or modern language which breathes more of a solid, scriptural, rational piety, than the Common Prayer of the church of England. And though the main of it was compiled considerably more than two hundred years ago, yet is the language of it, not only pure, but strong and elegant in the highest degree. Little alteration is made in the following edition of it (which I recommend to our societies in America.)" These are his words and his name is subscribed to what I have read.

Q. Very well. But will you undertake to say that when Mr Wesley recommended his "*edition of the COMMON PRAYER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,*" he meant to recommend the *episcopal mode of church government* ?

A. I will not say he did.

Q. Do you not think that if Mr. Wesley had intended to recommend the episcopal form of government, he would have expressed himself plainly on the subject ? and not recommend an *edition of the Liturgy*, when he intended to recommend an episcopal mode of church government ?

A. I think he would.

Q. Why, then, is Mr. Wesley made to say, in your book of discipline, he recommended the episcopal mode of government, when he only recommended his *edition of the Liturgy* ?

A. Perhaps those who drew up the account in the discipline thought Mr. Wesley recommended this form of government.

Q. If they really thought so, why did they not give his own words ? Was it not as easy to transcribe what he wrote, as to substitute the phrase "the episcopal mode of church government" for "the Common Prayer of the church of England ?" and does not substituting the one for the other look a little like design ?

A. ———

But there is another Prayer Book, says one, which was printed in London in the year 1786 ; in which "the general minutes of the Methodist episcopal church in America" are bound up : and surely, this fact, if it will not prove that Mr. Wesley recommended this form of government, will at least, prove that it met his approbation when adopted. This prayer book now lies before us, and we find

it differs from the one published by Mr. Wesley in the title page—the addition of a new “Article of Religion”—and the inserting of the “general minutes.” In other respects the Prayer Books are so much alike, that the one printed in 1786 is not announced as a *second* edition of that work; nor is any note prefixed explaining the reasons for adding a new article of religion, or for inserting “the general minutes.” Every thing, as far as we can discover, stands just as it did in the Prayer Book of 1784; and every thing, which according to usage we had a right to look for in an altered or improved edition, is carefully omitted.

These minutes, containing seventy-six questions with their answers, occupy thirty-three pages of the Prayer Book, and are headed as follows:

“The General Minutes of the Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, forming the Constitution of the said church.”

Let the reader bear in mind that this Prayer Book and these “Minutes” were printed in the year 1786; and that they bear internal marks which render it doubtful, whether they were printed for Mr. Wesley. But even if they had been printed for him, they can avail nothing towards proving the matter at issue, viz: that Mr. Wesley “recommended the episcopal mode of church government” to the American Methodists, for these “general minutes” were taken at the conference, *two years before* this Prayer Book was printed, and consequently the inserting of them in it, cannot be converted into a recommendation of this particular form of government.

Nor will the inserting of these “minutes” in the Prayer Book prove that Mr. Wesley approved of the title “the Methodist Episcopal Church;” for in the progress of this work, documents will be found, which unequivocally declare his disapprobation of the proceedings of the conference in relation to every thing appertaining to episcopacy.

These “minutes,” so far from availing any thing in favor of the hierarchy, will, we conceive, do it great dis-service. For 1. if the minutes inserted in the Prayer Book, be the true and correct ones, those published and issued from our book room in a bound volume, cannot be genuine; one or the other must have been altered, we leave to the admirers of episcopacy to say which. 2. If “the Minutes” in the Prayer Book be the genuine ones, then according to the title, they “form a Constitution for the Methodist Episcopal Church.” So that those who say the restrictive rules of 1808 are a constitution, must be mistaken: or, if they are not mistaken, then we have *two* constitutions, the one a new, and the other an old one.

We intimated above, that the Prayer Book printed in 1786, in which “the general minutes of the conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church” are inserted, was not printed by Mr. Wesley. In proof of this point, it may be necessary to state that Mr. Wesley had his own printing office, types and printing presses, where he had his books printed, as may be seen by the following clause in his will.

"Feb. 25, 1789.

"I give my types, printing presses and every thing pertaining thereto, to Mr. Thomas Rankin and George Whitefield, in trust, for the use of the conference.

JOHN WESLEY."

Those who would offer the inserting of the "general minutes" in the Prayer Book, as proof of Mr. Wesley's approbation of the form of government, or the title of the Methodist Episcopal Church, should first prove that the Prayer Book was printed by Mr. Wesley, and the Minutes inserted with his knowledge and consent. This cannot be done; for we have evidence from the Prayer Book itself, that it was *not* printed at Mr. Wesley's press, but at that belonging to "Frys and Couchman." The circumstance, therefore, of its being printed by "Frys and Couchman," and *not* by Mr. Wesley, renders the whole affair suspicious, and will, when taken in connexion with the statements made by the conference before and after its publication, nullify any argument that may be attempted to be adduced in favor of Mr. Wesley's approbation.

We shall now give the title page of three Prayer Books, that our readers may perceive wherein they agree and wherein they differ.

NO. 1.
"The Sunday service of the Methodists in *North America*, with other occasional services. London, printed in the year MDCCLXXXIV."

NO. 2.
"The Sunday service of the Methodists in the *United States of America*, with other occasional services. London, printed by Frys and Couchman, *Workshop street, Upper Moorfields*, 1786."

NO. 3.
"The Sunday service of the Methodists with other occasional services. *The fourth edition*, London, printed in the year 1792."

That which we have designated by No. 1, was printed by Mr. Wesley—was brought out to "North America" by Dr. Coke was adopted by the conference of 1784, and was used by the preachers after the church was organized. In this Prayer Book there is nothing about episcopacy, nor any recommendation of the episcopal mode of church government. No. 2, was printed in London, by "Frys and Couchman," where Mr. Wesley had his printing office. It was printed for somebody, (we know not for whom; perhaps for Dr. Coke, who in 1786, was under censure by Mr. Wesley, for the address he presented to general Washington,) and contains an Article of Religion, not contained in Mr. Wesley's Prayer Book, and the Minutes of the Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a title which we believe Mr. Wesley never approved. No. 3, was printed after Mr. Wesley's decease, for the Methodists in Europe, and is introduced here, merely to shew the coincidence in the *imprint*, no printer's name being affixed to those which were printed at Mr. Wesley's press. We might also mention, that after the publication of the Prayer Book of 1786, a rule was passed in the conference that no book should be sold among his societies, which was not printed at his press. But whether this rule was passed with special reference to the Prayer Book of 1786 or not, we cannot say.

We shall notice only one question, in the general minutes, with its answer, and then we shall have done with the Prayer Book.

“ Q. 3. As the ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs of these United States have passed through a very considerable change by the revolution, what plan of church government shall we hereafter pursue ?

A. We will form ourselves into an episcopal church, under the direction of superintendents, elders, deacons, and helpers, according to the forms of ordination annexed to our Liturgy, and the form of discipline set forth in these minutes.”

The reader is now requested to compare this account of the origin of our episcopacy and church government, with the account published in our Book of Discipline, and with the one in our Book of Minutes. The difference is glaring, that every one must see it. In this answer there is nothing about Mr. Wesley’s “ *recommending the episcopal mode of church government*”—nothing about his “ *preferring*” that mode to any other—nothing about his “ *counsel*” to ordain a *third* order of ministers—nothing about a “ *separate and independent church*.” Nothing of all this ; for to use the language of a preacher, who was a member of the conference of 1784.—“ These names were born in America, and never had Mr. Wesley’s approbation.”

We have one thing more to offer, namely, the third section of the fifth edition of the Book of Discipline, printed in New York in 1795, which is as follows :

“ On the Nature and Constitution of our Church.—We are thoroughly convinced, that the Church of England, to which we have been united, is deficient in several of the most important parts of Christian discipline ; and that (a few ministers and members excepted) it has lost the life and power of religion. We are not ignorant of the spirit and designs it has ever discovered in Europe, of rising to pre-eminence and worldly dignities by virtue of a national establishment, and by the most servile devotion to the will of temporal governors : and we fear, the same spirit will lead the same church in these United States (though altered in its name) to similar designs and attempts, if the number and strength of its members will ever afford a probability of success ; and particularly to obtain a national establishment, which we cordially abhor as the great bane of truth and holiness, and consequently a great impediment to the progress of vital Christianity.

“ FOR THESE REASONS, we have thought it our duty to form ourselves into an independent church. And as the most excellent mode of church government, according to our *most mature judgment*, is that of a *moderate episcopacy*; and as we are persuaded, *that the uninterrupted succession of bishops from the apostles*, can be proved neither from the scripture nor antiquity ; we therefore have constituted ourselves into an *episcopal church*, under the direction of *bishops*, elders, deacons and preachers, according to the forms of ordination annexed to our Prayer Book, and the regulations laid down in this form of discipline.”

At what precise time this section was written, we are not able to say ; but think it was about the year 1787, that being the year in which Mr. Wesley's name was left off the minutes, the term "bishops" introduced—and the church declared "independent." We are pretty confident it was written after the Prayer Book of 1786 was printed, and the "General Minutes" were published. Had the inserting of the minutes in the Prayer Book been considered any proof of Mr. Wesley's approbation of the form of government or the title of the church, no doubt the conference would have noticed that fact, and appealed to it as proof. Instead of that, there is no reference whatever made to those minutes, nor is Mr. Wesley's name once mentioned in the section. Indeed, reasons are assigned in it for declaring themselves an independent church, and for adopting the episcopal mode of government, very different from all that was given before. At one time such reasons are assigned as grew out of the changes "in ecclesiastical and civil affairs produced by the revolution." At another, we are told it was because "Mr. Wesley recommended the episcopal mode of church government." And here we are told it was because the church of England (altered in name) had lost "the life and power of religion, a few of her ministers and members excepted,"—because as "she had ever discovered designs of rising to pre-eminence in Europe," fears were entertained that the same spirit would lead to similar designs and attempts in these United States—and to prevent a national establishment, they thought it their duty to become an "independent church," and adopt a "moderate episcopacy."

If we are mistaken in fixing the precise period when the above section was written, we cannot be mistaken respecting the judgment which will be pronounced on the person who wrote it, when it shall have been known, that he made a proposition to be united to this very same church, himself and his colleague in the episcopacy, to receive consecration from one of its bishops, and the preachers who had been ordained by himself to be re-ordained by this same gentleman.

2. We think Mr. Wesley never intended to create Dr. Coke a bishop, because he says, "Lord King's account of the primitive church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the *same order*." As he believed, with Lord King, that there were but *two* orders of ministers in the church, namely bishops or presbyters, and deacons—as he believed that bishops and presbyters were the same order, and that there was no higher order than a presbyter, he could not have intended to create a third. The distinction between bishops and presbyters being the foundation of the episcopal form of government, and this distinction having no existence in fact, nor in Mr. Wesley's creed, our episcopal superstructure falls to the ground.

3. As he believed bishops and presbyters are the same order, he believed also, they possess the *same powers*; for he says, "they have the *same right to ordain*." If so, then Dr. Coke, being a presbyter of the church of England, had as good an ecclesiastical right to or-

dain ministers for the Methodist societies in America as Mr. Wesley himself had, if the preachers would have submitted to receive ordination from the Doctor's hands. But knowing that Mr. Asbury had declared "he would receive no coadjutor in the superintendency of the work;" he thought it best to guard against every objection that might be made, or difficulty that might arise in carrying into effect Mr. Wesley's wishes. This will appear from the following extract of a letter which he wrote to Mr. W. dated August 9th, 1784. See Moore's life of Wesley. vol. 2, page 276.

"HONOURED AND DEAR SIR:—

"The more attentively I consider the subject, the more expedient it appears to me, that the power of ordaining others should be received by me from you, by the imposition of your hands; and that you should lay hands on brother Whatcoat and brother Vasey, for the following reasons: 1. It seems to me the most scriptural way, and most agreeable to the practice of the primitive churches. 2. *I may want all the influence in America which you can throw into my scale.* Mr. Brackenbury informed me at Leeds, that he saw a letter in London from Mr. Asbury, in which he observed "*that he would not receive any person deputed by you to take any part of the superintendency of the work invested in him,* or words evidently implying so much."

4. "The *uninterrupted succession* I know to be a fable, which no man ever did, or can prove." Rev'd. J. Wesley. In this short sentence Mr. Wesley not only denies the uninterrupted succession, but the exclusive right of bishops to ordain, and in denying these, he denies the *Jure Divino* of bishops which has always been made to rest upon apostolic and uninterrupted succession.* See Archbishop Potter.

5. Mr. Wesley, by appointing Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury joint superintendents, did not intend to create them bishops; for then there would have been a plurality of bishops at the same time, having the pastoral charge of the same church, a thing contrary to primitive usage, as has been already stated by Lord King.

6. Because Mr. Wesley in the letter he wrote to Mr. Asbury, Sept. 20th, 1788, in which he intended to make known his utter dis-

* Bancroft, in a sermon preached at Paul's cross. Jan. 12th. 1588, maintained, that the bishops of England were a distinct order from priests, and had superiority over them *jure divino* and directly from God. This doctrine had never before been publicly broached in England: it was new and strange to both Puritans and Churchmen. Till this time it had been always supposed, that the order of bishops, as distinct from, and superior to presbyters, was a mere human institution. Statesmen took the alarm at the power of bishops being derived from God, and not from the magistrate, as this struck at the Queen's supremacy ‡ But the new doctrine soon became fashionable among the clergy; and the nonsense which we have since heard about the episcopal succession, sprung out of it." Isaac's Church Claims Investigated. page 71.

‡ Neal's history of the Puritans. vol. 1. chap. 7.

approbation of Mr. Asbury's assuming the title of bishop, and allowing himself to be called by that name, concludes with the following remark.—“ Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better.” Why does Mr. Wesley introduce the Presbyterians here? And what connexion has this sentence with the rest of his letter? We perceive none. The fact is, this sentence without an explanatory key, is not intelligible. But if we connect it with a sentence in Dr. Coke's letter to the Bishop of London, dated March 29th, 1799, we think the key is found, which makes his meaning quite clear. The Doctor says, “ But I return with a full conviction that our numerous societies in America would have been a *regular Presbyterian church*, if Mr. Wesley and myself had not taken the steps which we judged it necessary to adopt.” With this sentence before us, we think we understand Mr. Wesley's meaning, with reference to the Presbyterians. It seems probable that Dr. Coke, or Mr. Asbury, or both, had attempted to make an apology, and explain to Mr. Wesley the alleged reasons, for having organised an episcopal form of church government; and, together with other things, urged the necessity there was for taking such a course to prevent the Presbyterians from gaining too much influence. But after all that was advanced in justification of the measure, including all that could be said about the Presbyterians and the disposition of the people to be Presbyterians, Mr. Wesley disapproves of their procedure, and says, “ Men may call me a *knave* or a *fool*, a *rascal*, a *scoundrel*, and I am content; but they shall never by my consent, call me a bishop. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this. Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better.” Thus denouncing in the most severe and unqualified terms, the very thing which it is said he “ recommended.”

But it may be asked, if Mr. Wesley did not intend to create Dr. Coke a bishop, why did he lay his hands on him, and give him letters of ordination, inasmuch as the Doctor was, at that very time a presbyter of the church of England, as well as himself? This, we acknowledge, was always a matter that appeared to us to be involved in mystery; but since the publication of Mr. Wesley's letter upon the subject, we think this mystery is happily cleared up. Let it be distinctly noted (1.) that Mr. Wesley acknowledged in the letter which he gave Dr. Coke, (a letter of appointment, not of ordination as it has been called, for the term ordination is not found in it) that the Doctor was his *equal* in point of *order*; for in speaking of himself, he styles himself “ a presbyter of the church of England,” and when he speaks of the Doctor, he styles him “ a presbyter of the church of England” also. (2) Mr. Wesley declared his conviction, a conviction produced by reading the writings of Lord King, that presbyters and bishops are the same *order*; and that there was no higher order in the church than that of a presbyter. (3) To suppose then, that Mr. Wesley intended by the imposition of his hands, to create the Doctor a bishop, after the unequivocal declaration he made of the identity of bishops and presbyters, would be to affix, on

Mr. Wesley the charge of inconsistency, if nothing else. Nor will the matter be mended by saying, as some have done, he secretly intended the thing, but not the name; and that he recommended, to the American societies, the episcopal form of church government, although he so strongly opposed the use of the term bishop! And, is it possible, that any one can entertain such an opinion of Mr. Wesley? If so, no opinion can be more incorrect and ill-founded. We appeal to the whole of Mr. Wesley's long and eminently useful life for a refutation of this sentiment. When did he ever act in the above disingenuous and Jesuitical manner? When was he ever known to practise that kind of double dealing? O! how unjust to load his name and memory with such obloquy, for the poor and paltry satisfaction of trying to support our episcopacy? (4) If Mr. Wesley ordained Dr. Coke a bishop, in the common acceptation of that term, then did he create a church officer greater than himself; and of consequence he brought himself into subjection to Dr. Coke, by making the Doctor his superior. The same remark will hold good with respect to his subjection to Mr. Asbury, and every other person, that might be raised to the episcopate. (5) If the Doctor was constituted a bishop, he was raised to a rank above a presbyter, and invested with superior powers. In that case, he that was sent, was greater than he that sent him; thereby affording an instance of conduct in both parties, that has no parallel in either civil or ecclesiastical history. For then, Mr. Wesley who was only a presbyter, and consequently inferior to a bishop, assumed the prerogative to send his superior to do a work, in his name, which he himself could not go to do. And he not only gave him instructions how to act, but provided for and supported him in the execution of the duties assigned him. Nay more, the inferior called his superior to an account for his conduct, and from the mere sovereignty of his own will, punished that superior by leaving his name out of the minutes of the British conference for one year. (6.) If the Doctor, by the imposition of Mr. Wesley's hands, is created a bishop, the objection of the Rev'd. Doctor Horne, bishop of Norwich, lies in full force. He says, "if a presbyter can ordain a bishop, then the greater is blessed of the less, and the order of all things is inverted."

To illustrate this argument, let us suppose that any three local elders in the Methodist Episcopal Church, should pretend to ordain another elder, a bishop, by the imposition of their hands, would the person thus ordained be a bishop? And would he be received as a bishop by the rest of his brethren? Whether he would be a bishop in the common ecclesiastical sense of that word or not, we shall not now decide, but we are pretty certain, he would not be received as such by our church. Let those, then, who advocate "*three orders*," tell us how "any three elders of the general conference," can do, what local brethren of the *same order* cannot do? See Book of Discipline, chap. 1. sec. 1. ques. 2. Or, let them tell us how Mr. Wesley and his coadjutors, who were only presbyters of the church of England, could create an *order* of ministers in the church of Christ

greater than themselves? This is done already, says one, in the "Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy," page 42, where the author proposes this very objection, and answers it. "But says the objector, 'have presbyters authority to constitute a minister superior to themselves?' Undoubtedly. It will be admitted, that the apostles were a grade of ministers superior to the elders; and yet St. Paul was ordained by a body of elders. Acts 13, ch. 1, ver. 4" From this answer we are justified in supposing, that the author of a "Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy" thought St. Paul was *not* an apostle before this transaction; and that he was raised to be an apostle by the imposition of the hands of those *prophets and teachers*, whom he calls "elders" All this however, is in flat contradiction to what St. Paul himself tells us. He says, he was "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father." Gal. ch. 1, ver 1. Dr. Macknight, in his comment on this text, says, "St. Paul was first made an apostle by Christ, when he appeared to him in the way to Damascus, Acts IX. 15. And three years after that, his apostolic commission was renewed. Acts XXII. 20. So that he was first sent forth, neither by the church at Jerusalem, nor by that at Antioch. The Holy Ghost, indeed, ordered the prophets at Antioch (Acts XIII 2.) to separate Paul and Barnabas; but it was to the work whereunto he had called them formerly. This separation was simply a recommending them to the grace of God by prayer. And in fact it is so termed. Acts XIV. 26.

Archbishop Potter says, "this rite of imposing hands, whereby other ministers were ordained, *was never used in making apostles*. It was a distinguishing part of their character, that they were immediately called and ordained by Christ himself, who gave them the Holy Ghost by breathing on them; but neither he, nor any other is ever said to lay hands on them." page 264.

7. As Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke were of the same order, to wit, the order of presbyters, the Doctor had as good a clerical right to ordain Mr. Wesley a bishop, as Mr. W. had to ordain the Doctor. This was the case according to Mr. Wesley's own views of ecclesiastical usage, and this is the opinion of the Rev. Mr. Moore, Mr. Wesley's biographer. "As presbyters of the church, they had, certainly, the same right to ordain; and if Dr. Coke had been the father of that great work which is called Methodism, he would in that case, have had a right to ordain Mr. Wesley to superintend any part of that work." Moore's Life of Wesley, vol. 2, page 278. If we contemplate the subject then, as it presented itself to Mr. W's. own mind at the time he laid his hands on the Doctor, it will assume a different aspect from that, in which it has been represented by the friends of the hierarchy. Mr. Wesley considered himself, under God, the father of all the Methodists in Europe and America. He considered, that he had a right to govern those societies which had been raised by his instrumentality, and had put themselves under his care. He considered it to be his prerogative to transfer the power of governing the societies, which he could not personally superintend, to Dr. Coke, or any other person, he might see fit to ap-

point. Who could think, that, by making this transfer to Dr. Coke, and appointing him to *superintend* the societies in the United States, Mr. Wesley intended to create a *third order* in the church, and establish for those societies, an episcopal mode of government? Especially when he substantially affirmed that he believed there were but TWO ORDERS; and in the same letter declared "*they (the American societies) are at full liberty to follow the scriptures and the primitive church.*" Yet this is the whole of the authority upon which the friends of episcopacy rest their cause.



SECTION II.

If it be argued that the Doctor was a bishop, raised above the order of presbyters by the imposition of Mr. Wesley's hands, how shall we account for his conduct in making proposals to bishop White of Philadelphia, to become united with the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States, and to have the preachers in the Methodist Episcopal church re-ordained by bishop White, and himself and the gentleman connected with him, *consecrated** for the episcopal office.

The following is a copy of his letter attested by bishop White
 "Right Reverend Sir:—

Permit me to intrude a little on your time, upon a subject of great importance.

You, I believe are conscious that I was brought up in the church of England, and have been ordained a presbyter of that church. For many years I was prejudiced, even I think, to bigotry, in favor of it: but through a variety of causes and incidents, to mention which would be tedious and useless, my mind was exceedingly biassed on the other side of the question. In consequence of this, I am not sure but I went further *in the separation* of our church in America, than Mr. Wesley, from whom I had received my commission, did intend. He did indeed solemnly invest me, as far as he had a right so to do, with episcopal authority, but did not intend, I think, that our entire separation should take place. He being pressed by our friends on this side the water, for ministers to administer the sacraments to them (there being very few clergy of the church of England then in the states) *he went farther, I am sure, than he would have gone if he had foreseen some events which followed.* And this I am certain of—that *he is now sorry for the separation.*

But what can be done for a re-union which I wish for; and to accomplish which, Mr. Wesley, I have no doubt would use his influence

* "Or, it may have been the CONSECRATION of himself and the gentleman connected with him, for this measure was hinted in a conversation that afterwards took place between us, altho' he desired me to remark, that it was not made a condition of the union."

Extract of a letter, dated Philadelphia, Sept. 13, 1806. Signed,
 WILLIAM WHITE.

to the utmost ? The affection of a very considerable number of the preachers and most of the people, is very strong towards him, notwithstanding *the excessive ill usage he received from a few.* My interest also is not small ; and both his and mine would readily and to the utmost, be used to accomplish that (to us) very desirable object : if a readiness were shown by the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church to re-unite.

It is even to your church an object of great importance. We have now above 60,000 adults in our society in these states ; and about 250 travelling ministers and preachers ; besides a great number of local preachers, very far exceeding the number of travelling preachers ; and some of these local preachers are men of very considerable abilities ; but if we number the Methodists as most people number the members of their church, viz.—by the families which constantly attend the divine ordinances in their places of worship, they will make a larger body than you possibly conceive. The society, I believe, may be safely multiplied by five on an average, to give us our stated congregations ; which will then amount to 300,000. And if, the calculation, which, I think some eminent writers have made, be just, that three-fifths of mankind are un-adult (if I may use the expression) at any given period, it will follow that all the families, the adults of which form our congregations in these states amount to 750,000. About one-fifth of these are blacks.

The work now extends in length from Boston to the South of Georgia ; and in breadth, from the Atlantic to lake Champlain, Vermont, Albany, Redstone, Holstein, Kentucky, Cumberland, &c.

But there are many hindrances in the way. Can they be removed ?

1. Our ordained ministers will not, ought not, to give up their right of administering the sacraments. I don't think that the generality of them, perhaps none of them, would refuse to submit to a re-ordination, if other hindrances were removed out of the way. I must here observe, that between 60 and 70 only, out of the two hundred and fifty have been ordained presbyters, and about 60 deacons (only). The Presbyters are the choicest of the whole.

2. The other preachers would hardly submit to re-union, if the possibility of their rising up to ordination depended on the present bishops in America. Because, though they are all, I think I may say, zealous, pious and very useful men. yet they are not acquainted with the learned languages. Besides, they would argue, if the present bishops would waive the article of the learned languages, yet their successors might not.

My desire of a re-union is so sincere and earnest, that these difficulties make me tremble : and *yet something must be done before the death of Mr. Wesley, otherwise I shall despair of success* : for though my influence among the Methodists in these states as well as in Europe, is, I doubt not, increasing, yet *Mr. Asbury whose influence is very capital, will not easily comply, nay, I know he will be exceedingly averse to it.*

In Europe where some steps had been taken, tending to a separation, all is at an end. Mr. Wesley is a determined enemy of it, and I have lately borne an open and successful testimony against it.

Shall I be favoured with a private interview with you in Philadelphia? I shall be there, God willing, on Tuesday the 17th of May. If this be agreeable, I'll beg of you just to signify it in a note directed to me at Mr. Jacob Baker's, merchant, Market street, Philadelphia: or if you please by a few lines sent me by the return of the post, at Philip Rogers' Esq. in Baltimore, from yourself or Dr. Magaw: and I will wait upon you with my friend Dr. Magaw. We can then enlarge on the subjects.

I am conscious of it that secrecy is of great importance in the present state of the business, till the minds of you, your brother bishops and Mr. Wesley be circumstantially known. I must therefore beg that these things be confined to yourself and Dr. Magaw, till I have the honor of seeing you.

Thus you see that I have made a bold venture on your honor and candour, and have opened my whole heart to you on the subject as far as the extent of a small letter will allow me. If you put equal confidence in me, you will find me candid and faithful.

I have, notwithstanding, been guilty of inadvertencies. Very lately I found myself obliged (for the pacifying of my conscience) to write a penitential letter to the Rev. Mr. Jarratt, which gave him great satisfaction: and for the same reason I must write another to the Rev. Mr. Pettigrew.

When I was last in America, I prepared and corrected a great variety of things for our Magazine, indeed almost every thing that was printed, except some loose hints which I had taken of one of my journeys, and which I left in my hurry with Mr. Asbury, without any correction, entreating him that no part of them might be printed which could be improper or offensive. But through great inadvertency (I suppose) he suffered some reflections on the characters of the two above mentioned gentlemen to be inserted in the Magazine, for which I am very sorry: and probably shall not rest till I have made my acknowledgments more public; though Mr. Jarratt does not desire it.

I am not sure, whether I have not also offended you, sir, by accepting one of the offers made me by you and Dr. Magaw of the use of your churches, about six years ago, on my first visit to Philadelphia, without informing you of our *plan of separation from the Church of England*. If I did offend, [as I doubt I did, especially from what you said to Mr. Richard Dallam of Abingdon] I sincerely beg yours and Dr. Magaw's pardon. I'll endeavor to amend. But alas! I am a frail, weak creature.

I will intrude no longer at present. One thing only I will claim from your candour—that if you have no thought of improving this proposal, you will burn this letter, and take no more notice of it, (for it would be a pity to have us entirely alienated from each other, if we cannot unite in the manner my ardent wishes desire) but if you will further negotiate the business, I will explain my mind still more fully to you on the probabilities of success.

In the mean time permit me, with great respect, to subscribe myself, Right Reverend Sir,

Your very humble servant in Christ,

[Signed]

THOMAS COKE.

The Right Reverend Father in God,

BISHOP WHITE.

Richmond, April 24th, 1791.

P. S. You must excuse interlineations, &c. I am just going into the country and have no time to transcribe."

The Doctor, having, in this letter proposed "a private interview" with bishop White, "if agreeable," waited on him upon his arrival at Philadelphia. The following extract of a letter from the bishop to one of his friends contains the substance of the conversation which passed at the time between himself, Dr. Magaw, and Dr. Coke.

Philadelphia, July 30th, 1804.

"Reverend Sir:

In the spring of the year 1791, I received a letter from Dr. Coke, on the subject of uniting the Methodist Society with the Protestant Episcopal Church. An answer was returned. In consequence of which, Dr. Coke, on his coming to town made me a visit, having not then received my letter, but having heard that I had written. Our conversation turned chiefly on the aforesaid subject. The general outlines of Dr. Coke's plan were, a re-ordination of the Methodist ministers, and their continuing under the superintendence then existing, and on the practices of their peculiar institutions. There was also suggested by him, a propriety, but not a *condition made of admitting to the Episcopacy*, himself and the gentleman associated with him in the superintendence of the Methodist societies. This intercourse was communicated at the time from Dr. Coke to Dr. Magaw. I do not know of any other person then informed of it, unless I may except the gentleman above alluded to, by whom, I have been rightly informed, my letter to Dr. Coke was opened in his absence; such a freedom being understood, as I supposed, to arise out of the connexion between the two gentlemen. But for this part of the statement I cannot vouch. It was understood between Dr. Coke and me, that the proposal should be communicated to the bishops of the Episcopal Church at the next convention, which was to be in September 1792, in New York. This was accordingly done. After which I perceived no use of further communication on the subject; and I have not since seen Dr. Coke, nor heard from him, nor written to him.

It appears to me that the above comprehends either *explicitly* or by *implication*, all the points to which your letter leads. It would have been more agreeable to me, if no occasion of this testimony had occurred; and it is now given, merely to prevent the matter being understood otherwise than it really is.

The above is what I have written to Mr. McClaskey: and I remain, &c. &c.

Your affectionate brother,

WILLIAM WHITE."

Upon this correspondence, we shall make a few remarks. The first is this: The Doctor declares that Mr. W. "did indeed solemnly invest me, as far as he had a right so to do, with episcopal authority." If we remember correctly, this is the only place that we have seen, in which the Doctor explicitly states that Mr. Wesley "did invest him with *episcopal authority*." But whether he considered this investiture to grow out of the letter of appointment, or as he calls it, the "commission" which he received from Mr. Wesley, or the imposition of Mr. Wesley's hands, or both, he does not say. Let him, however, ascribe it to what he may, the declaration is attended with one most extraordinary qualifying phrase, namely, "AS FAR AS HE HAD A RIGHT SO TO DO." Why this limitation? Was the Doctor unacquainted with ecclesiastical usage in consecrating a bishop? Was he ignorant of the nature of the office or meaning of the word? No. Did he not know that "wherever a bishop be, whether at Rome, or at Eugubium, at Constantinople or at Rhegium, at Alexandria or at Thanis; he is of the same worth, and of the same priesthood: the force of wealth, or lowness of poverty doth not render a bishop more high or more low. That one bishop might exceed another in splendour, in wealth, in reputation, in extent of jurisdiction, as one king may surpass another in amplitude of territory; but as all kings, so all bishops are equal in office, and essentials of power."* Why then, in writing to a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, who knew these things as well as he did, did he use this language, "*as far as he had a right so to do*?" Must he not have known, that this Rev'd gentleman would construe these words into an acknowledgement, that Mr. Wesley, who was only a presbyter of the church of England, had no right to ordain another presbyter a bishop, or "invest him with episcopal authority?" Even common readers must be struck with surprise at such a sentence, and would be ready to reason on the subject in the following manner. Mr. W. had a right to ordain Dr. Coke a bishop, or he had not. If he had this right, why did the Doctor express himself in such a way as to make this right questionable? If he had not, why did he say "Mr. Wesley did indeed solemnly invest me with episcopal authority?" It is pretty obvious, we think, that the Doctor was conscious of being in a strait. Six years had elapsed, since, in his letter to General Washington, he had assumed the title of bishop. Wishing now to become connected with another church, he feels the embarrassing situation in which the assumption of that title had placed him. To relinquish his claim to it, he does not seem to have been disposed; and to support it, he is obliged to make Mr. W. act in a ridiculous manner, and himself to speak a language that is not reconcileable with common sense. For what is the plain meaning of the words under consideration? That Mr. W. did a *complete* act, for which he had only a *partial* right. To us indeed they seem to contemplate his right as only a *fractional* part of an entire whole. A right, but not an *entire* right to ordain a bishop!!

*St. Jerome, quoted by Dr. Barrow on the Pope's supremacy. page 151. and Archbishop Potter, page 182.

Who can understand this? and even if it were intelligible, it would be necessary to ascertain how "far" he had a right to go, or what proportion of the whole right this part was, whether one quarter, one half, three quarters or seven-eighths. We feel no inclination to pursue this subject farther, for really, it will not bear a serious investigation.

The second point, upon which we shall bestow a few thoughts, relates to the "separation of our church in America." The Doctor says, 1. "I am sure that he (Mr. W.) went farther than he would have gone, if he had foreseen some events which followed." 2. That "he is now sorry for the separation." And 3. "that he would use his influence to the utmost to accomplish a re-union." In speaking of a separation, the Dr. could not mean a separation from the present Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, to which he here proposed to be united. Because, 1. neither Mr. W. nor the Methodist Episcopal Church had ever been united with her. Indeed, she had no organised existence until some time after the Methodist Episcopal Church was organised. Nor 2. could he allude to the church of England, considered abstractly from Mr. W.; for our American brethren were totally disentangled from the state and the English hierarchy before Mr. W. was applied to for his advice. "The English government," says he, "had no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland." From which it is evident, that all connexion between the Methodists in America and the church of England had ceased before Mr. Wesley took any steps to supply us with ministers.

The separation, then, to which the Dr. refers, is a separation from Mr. W. himself and the Methodists in Great Britain as a component part of the established church. And that Mr. W. was sorry that the societies here had thrown off all connexion with himself we readily believe: especially as he was induced to ordain ministers for them, in consequence of their representations, and expressing a "*desire to continue under his care*, and still to adhere to the doctrines and discipline of the church of England." Nor, is it difficult to suppose that he went farther than he would have gone, if he had foreseen "the separation which followed." Farther, we believe he was sorry, extremely sorry, that both Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury transcended the limits of their authority, and assumed to themselves the title of bishops, contrary to his express directions. The Rev. Henry Moore, Mr. Wesley's biographer, speaks out plainly upon this subject. "With respect to the title of bishop, I know that Mr. Wesley enjoined the Doctor and his associates, and *in the most solemn manner*, that it should not be taken. In a letter to Mrs. Gilbert, the widow of the excellent Nathaniel Gilbert, Esq. of Antigua, a copy of which now lies before me, he states this in the strongest manner.—In this and in every deviation, I cannot be the apologist of Dr. Coke; and I can state, in contradiction to all that Dr. Whitehead and Mr. Hampson have said, that Mr. Wesley never gave his sanction to any of these things; nor was he the author of one line of all that Dr. Coke published in America on this subject.

His views, on these points, were very different from those of his zealous son in the gospel. He knew that a work of God neither needed, nor could be aided, nor could recommend itself to pious minds by such additions." Moore's life of Wesley, vol. 2. page 279. 280.

The third thing which we shall notice, relates to the proposed union of the Methodist Episcopal Church with the Protestant; the re-ordination of the preachers, and "the propriety of admitting to the episcopacy, himself and the gentleman who was associated with him in the superintendence of the Methodist Societies." Upon this point we shall say but little, but that little shall be to express our astonishment that the Doctor should have stooped to make such an offer, on the supposition that he considered himself a bishop. As we believe his heart was free, in every part of his public life, from the love of ease and the love of money, we can see no other reason for the overtures he made to Bishop White, than that he did not conceive he was in the common ecclesiastical sense of the word, a bishop.

Fourthly and lastly. Had this union taken place, and had Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury, the superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church, not been admitted to the episcopacy, what would then have been the name of our church and the nature of our government? But we may be told, the proposed union failed. Granted. But what prevented it? The subject was proposed to the next Protestant Episcopal Convention, held in New York, Sept. 1792. And had it not been for the death of Mr. Wesley, it is difficult now to say what would have been the results.

About eight years after the above proposition was made to Bishop White, Dr. Coke made a similar one to the Bishop of London, requesting him to ordain "a given number" of preachers of the Methodist connexion in England, as may be seen by referring to his letter, published in "Drew's Life of Dr. Coke," page 288. An extract of which is here given.

"May it please your Lordship,

I have felt a strong inclination for more than twelve months past, to take the liberty of writing to your lordship on a subject which appears to me of vast importance; I mean the necessity of securing the great body of Methodists, in connexion with the late Rev. John Wesley to the church of England. * * * * * A considerable number of our body have deviated in this instance," [receiving the Lord's Supper from their own preachers] "from the established church; and I plainly perceive, that this deviation, unless prevented, will in time, bring about an universal separation from the establishment.

But how can this be prevented? I am inclined to think that if a given number of our leading preachers, proposed by our general conference, were to be ordained and permitted to travel through our connexion, to administer the sacraments to those societies who have been thus prejudiced as above; every difficulty would be removed. I have no doubt that the people would be universally satisfied. The men of greatest influence in the connexion would, I am sure, unite with me; and every deviation from the church of England would be done away.

In a letter which, a few months past, I took the liberty of writing to your lordship, on the business of our societies in Jersey, (island) I observed that for a little time I had been warped from my attachment to the church of England, in consequence of my visiting the states of America ; but, like a bow too much bent, I have again returned. But I return with a full conviction that our numerous societies in America would have been a regular Presbyterian church, if Mr. Wesley and myself had not taken the steps which we judged it necessary to adopt.*

If this point be worthy of your lordship's consideration, I could wish that something might be done as soon as convenient ; as some of my most intimate friends, to whom I have ventured to disclose this plan, are far advanced in years. These are men of long standing, and of great influence in our connexion. The plan meets their decided approbation and cordial wishes for success ; and I have no doubt they would lay down their lives with joy, if they could see so happy a plan accomplished as I have now proposed. If an interview shall be thought necessary, on your lordship's signifying it, I will visit London for the purpose next month.

I did myself the honor, about a year ago, to lay this whole plan before the Attorney General, with whom I had the honour of being acquainted at Oxford ; and so far as a cursory view of the business could enable him to speak, he greatly approved of it, and some months past, encouraged me to lay the whole at the feet of your lordship. This I have now done ; and I pray you, my lord, whatever be your lordship's judgment, to forgive, at all events the liberty I have now taken. I have the honor to be,

My Lord, &c. &c.

T. COKE."

Manchester, March 29th, 1799.

As Mr. Wesley nowhere *explicitly* declared that by appointing the Doctor and Mr. Asbury superintendents, an order of bishops was contemplated, or an episcopal form of church government recommended, neither are the ordinations which he conferred viewed by writers among the English Methodists, who wrote in justification of Mr. Wesley's right to ordain, as favouring our title of episcopacy.

"Mr. Wesley suffered not the ecclesiastical authorities to interfere with the internal management of his societies : he would not suffer them to be controlled by any parochial clergyman in the three

*The Doctor refers to church government, not to doctrines contrary to those of the church of England, which he held to be Arminian. 2. He intimates that the "numerous societies in America" preferred a presbyterian form of government, to an episcopal one. 3. That to prevent the societies from becoming a regular Presbyterian church, he and Mr. Wesley took the steps they did. (How far Mr. Wesley was in reality concerned will be seen in this work). And 4. from the whole we infer, that the episcopal form of church government was not such as the people would have adopted, if it had been submitted to their choice ; but in consequence of certain measures, it was imposed upon them contrary to their inclination and without their consent.

kingdoms ; he gave the Lord's supper himself in unconsecrated chapels, and employed clergymen to do this: he gave up episcopal ordination as understood by high churchmen ; and in pursuance of his belief in the validity of presbyterian ordination, he ordained preachers to give the sacraments ; so that according to strict church notions, he sanctioned what some would call lay administration.

The great principle of the validity of presbyterian ordination, *which is the ordination of the conference*, was established by Mr Wesley, who himself acted upon this principle by giving ordination;* and thus he renounced entirely the notion of bishops and presbyters being distinct orders." English Methodist Magazine for July, 1825. page 464, 465.

" The ordination or appointment of preachers among us more nearly assimilates to the Presbyterian form, than any other. But what do the high ecclesiastics say to all this ? They deny that any ordination is valid but episcopal ordination, and in this, they assimilate to the Romish church. We give them their opinion with all its benefits." *ibid*, page 467.

The preceeding pertinent and lucid remarks, on the ordinations conferred by Mr. Wesley. will not be called in question by any one, who credits what Mr. Wesley has said, respecting the parity of bishops and presbyters ; nor will they be contradicted by any who is acquainted with primitive ecclesiastical usage. And, with this view of the subject. coincide the opinions of the great body of the ministers and members of our church. These remarks were drawn up, we believe, by the book committee of the British connexion, and may be considered as an expression of the opinion of the British conference. Besides, they were republished by our book agents, as conveying correct information for our members ; and yet, notwithstanding all this, a contrary statement coming from our book agents, has been published in one of the most popular works in this country. A work which is highly and deservedly appreciated by the different religious denominations of Protestant Christians ; we mean Buck's Theological Dictionary. In the last edition of this work, published in 1825, by Mr. W. Woodward of Philadelphia, there is an " Appendix, being an account of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States ; for which the editor of this complete edition of Buck's Dictionary is indebted to Messrs. N. Bangs and J. Emory, publishers for the Methodist Episcopal Church." In the account furnish-

* At the conference of 1785, says Mr. Miles, in his History of the Methodists. page 168, Mr Wesley " set apart three of our well tried preachers, John Pawson, Thomas Hanby, and Joseph Taylor, to minister in Scotland. He also recommended to the Scotch Methodists the use of the Abridged Common Prayer. This latter they declined ; the former they were thankful for."

Also, at the conference of 1787 Mr. Wesley " set apart for the sacred office by the imposition of his hands and prayer, Messrs Alexander Mather, Thomas Rankin and Henry Moore, without sending them out of England ; strongly advising them at the same time. that according to his example, they should continue united to the established church, so far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit. The former of these brethren Mr. Mather, he ordained a bishop or superintendent." page 175.

ed by these gentlemen, is the following sentence. "As to the government, the title sufficiently ascertains its distinctive character, it being in fact and name *episcopal*. Three orders of ministers are recognized, and the duties peculiar to each are clearly defined." "*Three orders of ministers!*" What a pity we have not been told what these "three orders" are. One of these gentlemen (Mr. N. Bangs) has published a book entitled "A Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy," in which, after treating of the order of deacons, he has "demonstrated" the identity of presbyters and bishops; and to make out the third order, he says, a Methodist bishop "*very much resembles a primitive evangelist!*"* Whether this is the "third order" which is here alluded to, or not, we cannot say. But waiving this, we may be permitted to ask, who authorised these Rev. gentlemen to furnish the editor of Buck's Dictionary, with such an imposing account of the Methodist episcopal church? And if we and the public are obliged to receive *their* statement of "*three orders*" as a "fact," because *they* have said so? We believe no man, nor body of men, except the general conference, is competent to pronounce judgment in this matter for the church: and even if the general conference had made the assertion, and had not supported it by better proof than we have yet seen, we would continue to believe that our "episcopal government" has nothing of episcopacy in it, as understood by episcopalians, but the "name."

In opposition to the doctrine of "three orders," so pompously laid down by the "publishers for the Methodist episcopal church," we shall present our readers with an extract of a letter, from one of those old preachers who was a member of the general conference of 1784 and who is still in the itinerant connexion, received in answer to our letter, marked No. 2 in the Appendix. Speaking of Mr. Wesley's appointing Dr. Coke a superintendent, he says "but that he did not consider it to be a *third order*, is evident from his own declaration of his full belief that bishops and presbyters were the same order in the primitive church, and had the same right to ordain. He could not, therefore, give any counsel or order to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, or any person to ordain a third order of ministers in our church, that is to say, an order of bishops distinct from, and superior to, an order of presbyters. There was therefore, I am bold to say, no such letter or paper in existence as you enquire for." Here, then, is the opinion of one who was a member of the conference when the church was organized, who does *not* "recognise three orders of ministers;" and farther argues, that Mr. W. himself did not recognise three orders because he declared his belief in the identity of bishops and presbyters.

Nor is this venerable brother singular in his opinion, respecting *two orders* only. For, whatever pains may have been taken, to impress the public mind with the belief, that our church recognises *three orders*, it must be evident, that the conference of 1789 did not recognise *three*; or if they did, they acted a most inconsistent part, by placing Mr. Wesley's name on their minutes, as a bishop. The first question on those minutes is as follows:

* The same doctrine seems to have been advanced in the Methodist Magazine for Jan. and Feb. of the present year, and perhaps, by the same hand.

“Who are the persons that exercise the episcopal office in the Methodist church in Europe and America?”

Ans. John Wesley, Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury.

By this answer, Mr. Wesley is announced as one of the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. But every body who knows any thing of the matter, knows that Mr. Wesley was no more than a presbyter of the church of England. The conference having asserted the identity of their offices respectively, it follows of course, that if Mr. Wesley was not a bishop, neither were the other two; and that the episcopal office, in the Methodist episcopal church, is filled by mere presbyters. Or, in other words, that in our church, there are *not* “three orders,” or an order of bishops distinct from and superior to an order of presbyters. But we cannot dismiss this subject without making some further remarks; for considerations here present themselves which emphatically claim attention. In the year 1787, two years before the date of the minutes, of which the above question and answer is a part, Mr. Wesley’s name had been left off the American minutes. In the interim, he had written the letter printed in “Moore’s Life of Wesley,” in which this great and good man had said to Mr. Asbury, “men may call me a *fool* or a *knave*, a *rascal*, or *scoundrel*, and I am content, but they shall never by my consent call me a *bishop*.” And yet, after it was known that the very term was so extremely offensive to him, his name was fixed at the head of the American minutes as one of their bishops! Nor was this all. The conference had declared themselves “independent” of Mr. Wesley, because, as we have been told, they considered it improper in him, to attempt to exercise any authority, by appointing a superintendent over the preachers on this side the Atlantic; and yet, the conference not only entered him a bishop on *their* minutes for the American Methodists, in opposition to his most positive disapprobation of the term, but they entered him a bishop for the Methodist Church in Europe! These, it will be allowed, are strange acts; and, although some may feel themselves unable fully to understand them, yet we are very unwilling to attempt an explanation.

Had Mr. Wesley, however, been misunderstood as to his design in recommending the Liturgy, and appointing Dr. Coke a superintendent, or had the conference reasoned differently upon these subjects, from what we have done, there was no possibility of mistaking him in the following letter which he wrote to Mr. Asbury in little more than three years after the episcopal mode of government went into operation. See Moore’s Life of Wesley, vol. 2, p. 285.

“London, Sept. 20th 1788.

“There is, indeed, a wide difference between the relation wherein you stand to the Americans, and the relation wherein I stand to *all* the Methodists. You are the elder brother of the American Methodists; I am, under God, the father of the whole family. Therefore, I, naturally care for you all, in a manner no other person can do. Therefore I in a measure, provide for you all; for the supplies which Dr. Coke provides for you, he could not provide, were it not for me—were it not, that I not only permit him to collect, but support him in so doing.

But in one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid both the Doctor and you differ from me. I study to be *little*, you study to be *great*, I *creep*; you *strut* along. I found a school, you a *college*. Nay, and call it after your own names! O beware! Do not seek to be *something*! Let me be nothing, and Christ be all in all.

One instance of this your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called a *bishop*? I shudder, I start at the very thought. Men may call me a *knave*, or a *foul*, a *rascal*, a *scoundrel*, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me a *bishop*! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this! Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better.

Thus my dear Franky, I have told you all that is in my heart, and let this, when I am no more seen, bear witness how sincerely I am your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN WESLEY."

Having in this letter* expressed himself so pointedly against the title of bishop, which the Doctor and Mr. Asbury had assumed; it was most assuredly incumbent on them and on the American conference, if the latter were made acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, to have done Mr. Wesley justice, by honestly stating in their minutes, that he was opposed to the very name of bishop, and thus have taken upon themselves all the responsibilities of creating an episcopal form of government. This, however, was never done. The above letter was suppressed. Its contents were never suffered to transpire. But Mr. Wesley was made to speak a language, we believe he never spoke. His name was used to give a degree of sanction to their measures, which, it was thought would disarm resistance, if any were offered; and by this means was an episcopal government established; the name of the Rev'd. John Wesley being offered as a passport to all the contemplated ecclesiastical honours.



SECTION III.

Among the resolutions entered into at the conference of 1784, the preachers made the following solemn declaration.—“During the life of the Rev'd. Mr. Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves ready in matters belonging to church government, to obey his commands.” Yet when he expressed a wish that Mr. Whatcoat should be appointed a superintendent with Mr. Asbury, the conference objected to the appointment, and would not receive him.

* “1789. South Carolina, March 15th. We reached the city, having rode two hundred miles in about five days and two hours. Here I received a *bitter pill* from one of my greatest friends.” Asbury's Journal, vol. II. pa. 45. Query. Could this *bitter pill* be the above letter?

"London, Sept. 6th, 1786.

DEAR SIR :

I desire that you would appoint a general conference of all our preachers in the United States, to meet at Baltimore, on May the first, 1787. And that Mr. Richard Whatcoat may be appointed superintendent with Mr. Francis Asbury. I am, dear sir, your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN WESLEY."

To the Rev'd. DR. COKE.

There is something in the style of this letter, and in the authority exercised by Mr. Wesley in expressing this desire, compared with the minutes of conference of 1785, which we do not fully understand. Mr. Wesley's letter is dated Sept. 6th, 1786, and yet his name was left off the minutes of 1785. How is this? Did he know that the connexion which had heretofore existed between him and the American Methodists was dissolved, and his authority disowned? And did he, notwithstanding a knowledge of these facts, proceed to exercise his authority, as formerly, by desiring that Mr. Whatcoat should be appointed a superintendent? We cannot think so. Indeed, there is a mystery hanging over the whole of the proceedings of those times; if there is not a studied obscurity and evasion in the records of the church. We know it to be a fact that Mr. Wesley's name was left out of the minutes of conference; and many of our old members are acquainted with this fact as well as ourselves. But how many are acquainted with all the circumstances of the case? We presume but very few. We are free to acknowledge we are not.* And because it is a subject which so few understand, we bring it out before our elder brethren, who may have some knowledge of the proceedings of those early times; that some one or other may cast a ray of light upon a transaction which, down to the present hour, is enveloped in darkness. This we conceive is an act of justice due both to the dead and to the living. In the mean time we shall examine this matter according to the best lights we have, and in doing so, shall inquire, First, when was Mr. Wesley's name left off the minutes? Secondly. By whom was it done? And Thirdly for what reasons?

In the minutes of conference for 1785, we have the following account of the origin of the Methodist episcopal church. "As it was unanimously agreed at this conference, that circumstances made it expedient for us to become a separate body under the de-

*We had written these remarks, on the omission of Mr. Wesley's name, before we could procure the Prayer Books, and the Rev'd. Mr. Morrell's pamphlet. Finding, however, that the conclusions, which we had previously argued out, were established by these documents, we determined, rather than alter our manuscript, to let what we had written stand, and insert those documents, in such places as might best suit. This circumstance will account for the apparent want of connexion in some parts of our arrangement; and will serve to explain, why we anticipated a subject which is more fully treated elsewhere.

nomination of the Methodist episcopal church, it is necessary that we should here assign some reasons for so doing.

The following extract of a letter from the Rev'd. Mr. John Wesley, will afford as good an explanation as can be given of this subject."

Then follows the letter which we need not insert here, as it was inserted at page 12 of this essay, and the account is closed in the following manner :

"Therefore at this conference, we formed ourselves into an independent church ; and following the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the episcopal mode of church government, we thought it best to become an episcopal church, making the episcopal office elective, and the elected superintendent or *bishop*, amenable to the body of ministers and preachers."

Respecting this account, we have one or two inquiries to make. 1. Was it actually drawn up at the conference of 1784 ; and if so, by whom was it done, or was it written some time, perhaps years, afterwards ? Standing where it does, and without a date, it is certainly calculated to make an impression on the reader's mind, that it was drawn up at that very conference ; and such has always been our view of the subject, until very lately. Yet we think, upon a close inspection of the document itself, it will be found to afford *prima facie* evidence, that it was not written then, but some time afterwards. Hence the uniform use of the past tense ; "*circumstances made,*" "*we formed ourselves*" we "*thought it best,*" &c. all evidently proving that it was not written at that conference. 2. On the supposition, that it was drawn up, just as it is, at the conference of 1784, did the conference acknowledge that Mr. Wesley had any jurisdiction over them or not ? If they did, why is his name left out of the minutes, and thereby his authority disowned ? If they did not, why did they publish an *extract* of his letter, as giving as good an explanation of the subject as they could give, and besides this, declare that they adopted the episcopal form of government in compliance with his recommendation ? There seems to be here, something inexplicable, or something unfair ; and we know not how to account for it, unless upon the following hypothesis. That the conference held in Baltimore in Dec. 1784, acknowledged Mr. Wesley's authority, but for some reasons or other, it was subsequently disowned. That in consequence of the rejection of his authority, it became necessary to amend or alter the phraseology of the minutes of the conference of 1784, so as to make them quadrate with subsequent proceedings. We are led to this conclusion from three considerations. 1. Because it seems strange, if not unreasonable, to suppose, that they would give Mr. Wesley's name as the only authority for the adoption of the episcopal form of government, and at the very same conference, determine to reject him. 2. Because in quoting Mr. Wesley's letter in the above "account," that part of it which relates to the Liturgy is omitted. That there was no resolution passed at that conference to suppress that part of his letter we argue from the fact, that the Prayer Book, which had been abridged and recommended by Mr.

Wesley was used by the superintendents and many of the preachers, subsequently to the conference of '84: and we cannot believe that they would do a thing, the authority for doing which, they had previously and formally rejected. 3. Because we have the testimony of the Rev'd. Jesse Lee to prove that the minutes of conference *were altered*. "In the course of this year (1787) Mr. Asbury reprinted the general minutes, but *in a different form from what they were before*. The title of this pamphlet was as follows :

"A Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in American ; considered and approved at a conference held at Baltimore in the state of Maryland, on Monday the 27th day of December 1784. In which the Rev'd Thomas Coke L. L. D. and the Rev'd. Francis Asbury presided. Arranged under proper heads, and methodized in a more acceptable manner."

"This was the first time that our superintendents ever gave themselves the title of bishops* in the minutes. They changed the title themselves without the consent of the conference ; and at the the next conference they asked the preachers if the word *bishop* might stand in the minutes, seeing that it was a scriptural name, and the meaning of the word *bishop* was the same with that of superintendent.

Some of the preachers opposed the alteration and wished to retain the former title, but a majority of the preachers agreed to let the word *bishop* remain." Lee's History of Methodism, page 125.

Besides the words already noticed, there are other expressions in this "account," which should, by no means, be passed over in silence ; because, in our opinion, they, also, will go to prove, that this account was not drawn up in its present form at the conference of 1784. And, that every one may have a full understanding of the reasons which influence our judgment, we shall give Mr. Wesley's letter to Dr. Coke, when he appointed him a *Superintendent* ; or as it has been sometimes called, his letter of ordination. This is a very important document, and it is a matter of great surprise, that this letter was not published in the minutes of conference with Mr. Wesley's letter "to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury and the brethren in North America." Why it has not been suffered to see the light, either in those minutes, or in the book of discipline, we will not say. But, although it has no place in our official records, Mr. Drew, in his life of Dr. Coke vouches for its authenticity in the following words. "The following is a faithful copy, transcribed from the original, *in Mr. Wesley's own hand writing*, preserved among the papers of the late Dr. C. ke.

"To all to whom these presents shall come : John Wesley, late fellow of Lincoln College, in Oxford, presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greeting :

Whereas, many of the people in the Southern provinces of North America, who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to

* It is somewhat remarkable that as soon as Mr. Wesley's name was left out of the minutes, the term bishop was introduced into them.

the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the same church ; and whereas there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers.

Know all men, that I, John Wesley, think myself to be providentially called at this time to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America, And therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory, I have this day set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands and prayers, [being assisted by other ordained ministers,] Thomas Coke, doctor of civil law, a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this second day of September, in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred, and eighty-four.

JOHN WESLEY."

What are the prominent points in this letter which offer themselves to our consideration ? 1. That a representation had been made to Mr. Wesley, that the Methodist societies in America, were "greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, *according to the usage of the church of England.*" 2. That application, had been made to Mr. Wesley "to supply them with ministers" for the purpose of administering the same. 3. That those who applied to him expressed a "*desire to continue under his care.*" This item the reader is particularly requested to notice and remember, because it will serve to explain subsequent proceedings, and will stand as a justification of Mr. Wesley's conduct. And 4th. They assured him that the societies here would "still adhere to the doctrines and discipline of the church of England." Such were the representations, and such the promises which induced Mr. Wesley to abridge the Prayer Book of the Church of England—to ordain ministers for the American Methodists—and to appoint Dr. Coke his substitute to superintend or take care of these "destitute sheep in the wilderness."

In this situation, matters stood at the opening of the conference in 1784. Dr. Coke and his associates had arrived, with letters of authority, from Mr. Wesley ; and the long cherished hopes of the preachers were about to be realized, by having ordination conferred on themselves. That they felt elated with their prospects, is reasonable to suppose. And, although Mr. Asbury had said, "he would not receive any person deputed by Mr. Wesley to take any part of the superintendency of the work entrusted to him ;" yet neither he, nor the conference refused to receive Dr. Coke in the character in which Mr. Wesley had sent him. Indeed, to have shewn the least symptom of opposition, either to Mr. Wesley, or to Dr. Coke, at this juncture, would have been to prevent the accomplish-

ment of the most ardent wishes of Mr. Asbury and the preachers. It would have been to dash the cup from their lips when they were upon the very point of tasting its sweets. No opposition, therefore, was made. No resistance was offered. Every thing went on smoothly; and whether from prudence or policy, inclination or interest, Dr. Coke was received as a superintendent, and Mr. Wesley's authority acknowledged and respected. But how soon was the face of things changed? Scarcely had Mr. Asbury begun to exercise the functions of his new office, when Mr. Wesley's authority was rejected and his name left out of the minutes. It is to this transaction, we think the terms "separate" and "independent" in the account refer. "Circumstances made it expedient for us to become a *separate* body" Separate from whom? Not from the Church of England abstractly considered, no more than from the Lutheran church, the church of Scotland, or the church of Rome. No connexion had ever been avowed between the Methodist societies in America and any other body of Christians, except Mr. Wesley and the English Methodists, as the minutes of conference will prove. From whom then did they "separate"? The plain and obvious answer is, from Mr. Wesley and the English Methodists. Again it is said, "at this conference, we formed ourselves into an independent church." Independent of whom? Of Mr. Wesley, and in accordance with this declaration, his name was struck off the minutes of conference.

Our next inquiry is "by whom was it done"? A candid inquirer after the truth of the history of this fact would be ready to conclude before he entered upon the search, that there would be no difficulty to ascertain all the circumstances of the case by turning to the records of the church. But, how would he be surprised to find, that the conference have observed the most profound silence upon the subject; so much so, that the precise time when, and place where it was done, cannot be learnt from the minutes. This is the more extraordinary as it is contrary to the usage of Methodism. It is a fact well known to every Methodist, that the relation, in which every preacher stands whose name has been entered upon the minutes as a *member* of conference, is recorded upon the same. Does he, on account of his age or bodily infirmity, cease to travel at large? He is entered "superannuated," or a "supernumerary." Does he locate? He is entered "located." Does he withdraw from the connexion? He is entered "withdrawn." Is he expelled for a crime? He is entered "expelled." And if he dies in the work, his death is announced, and some short account of his life and labours is placed upon the minutes.* But there is no notice whatever

*In the minutes of conference for 1792, the year after Mr. Wesley's death, we have obituary notices of the following preachers. "Thomas Weatherford an European aged 56. upwards of *four* years a labourer in the vineyard of the Lord &c." "Peter Massie, who laboured faithfully in the ministry upwards of *three* years, &c. And, "George Browning *two* years and a *half* in the field of labour &c." But when Mr. Wesley died, who had laboured upwards of **SIXTY YEARS**, who was the father and founder of Method-

er taken of Mr. Wesley. And we believe his case is the only one in the history of Methodism, where a preacher's name had been dropped without something having been said on the subject, or some reason having been assigned for so doing. That such a remarkable occurrence should have taken place in the case of Mr. Wesley, who was so signally owned of God, by being made his instrument to raise up the people called Methodists, is surely the most extraordinary occurrence in the history of that people. That a man like him, who had filled the eye of the religious world for half a century, and who was known over Christendom by his labours and his writings, should be treated in this manner, is sufficient to awaken suspicion in the breast of every man, that those by whom this deed was done, were conscious that their conduct would not bear the light. All we know of the affair is, what Mr. Wesley himself tells us, that "*Mr. Asbury quietly sat by, until his friends by common consent, voted my name out of the American minutes.*"*

And for what reason was it done? This is our third and last inquiry. And from what we have said already, it will be perceived that we do not pretend to be able to give the reasons for this most extraordinary transaction. All we presume to offer is, the result of our investigation; and if mistaken, we hope we shall be pardoned for not learning what we had not more ample means of knowing. We infer then, that Mr. Wesley's name was not voted out of the American minutes at the conference held in Baltimore in December, 1784, when the church was organised: 1st, because Dr. Coke was present at that conference, and Mr. Wesley never complained of the Doctor, nor involved him in the censure which he pronounced on Mr. Asbury and his friends, for doing as they did: 2d, because, nearly two years after that period, Mr. Wesley went on to exercise the same authority over the American Methodists that he always had done, by directing "a general conference of all our preachers to meet at Baltimore, on May 1st. 1787; and by desiring that Mr. Whatcoat should be appointed a superintendent with Mr.

ism, and who was entered on the minutes as a bishop, at the time of his death, not one word is said about him, nor the least notice taken of his death. And he is thus treated with this cold neglect, if not contempt, notwithstanding all the pains which had been taken to impress the public mind with the belief that it was on account of the respect that was entertained for him, and because, "*he preferred the episcopal form of government to any other,*" that it was adopted!! O! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon.

* One of the preachers to whom we addressed the circular, No. 2, in the Appendix, writes thus. "I have shed many tears over your *fourth query*. I think it was done at a conference held in May, 1787. A vote was taken, it is not for me to mention the name of the mover. Dr. Coke was sorrowful, and I was sorrowful for many months, yea, I may say years. The pretext seemed plausible. It was done, and eternity will disclose the moving cause!!"

Another of them says, "I was not present at the time when Mr. Wesley's name was stricken from our minutes: a number of the elder brethren met and did the deed before we juniors, were admitted!!" And Dr. Coke says, "*Mr. Wesley received excessive ill usage from a FEW.*"

Asbury;" and 3d, because among the resolutions entered into at that conference, was the following. "Q. What can be done in order to the future union of the Methodists? A. During the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel, ready in matters belonging to church government, to obey his commands. And we *do engage*, after his death, to do every thing that we judge consistent with the cause of religion, in America, and the political interests of these States, to preserve and promote our union with the Methodists in Europe."

As for the reasons; we have heard it asserted by some, that the conference thought, if Mr. Wesley's name was retained on the minutes, church property would be jeopardised. But we cannot see how this could be the case. The revolutionary war was terminated before this period; peace followed; and the independence of the United States was fully acknowledged by the powers of Europe. We do not believe that considerations of this kind influenced those by whom this deed was done. For if those reasons had operated upon them in the first instance, we think it probable, they would have continued to operate on them, and that his name would have been kept from being placed on the minutes again, which was not the case.

A second reason is assigned by a writer, from whose work we make the following extract. "In 1786, Mr. Asbury complained of the long Latin word *superintendent*, and wished it to be termed *bishop*. This was not all, but he proposed to the Rev. Mr. Wesley, Mr. T. Mr. W. and Mr. A. as three persons to be appointed bishops for the United States, to act under Mr. Asbury.—Mr. Wesley's answer was to this purport, and is worthy to be engraven in characters of gold. 'During my life, there shall be no ARCH-BISHOPS in the Methodist church; but send me the man of your choice, and I shall have him appointed *joint superintendent* with you.' Mr. Asbury objected to either of these men proposed as *joint superintendents* with him; but desired Mr. Wesley to send a man of his choice, and he would receive him." Mr. Wesley accordingly appointed Mr. Whatcoat.

Another reason for the omission of his name, grows out of the authority he exercised, by his letter of September 6th, 1786, in which he directed that Mr. Whatcoat might be "appointed to superintend with Mr. Asbury; but this was a thing which the American preachers would not consent to. The Doctor, who was now on his second visit to the United States, and was present at the conference, contended that the preachers were obliged to receive Mr. Whatcoat, because they had said in the conference of 1784, during the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel, ready in matters belonging to church government, to obey his commands. Apprehensive that if Mr. Whatcoat was ordained, Mr. Wesley would recall Mr. Asbury to England," (Lee, page 126.) they renounced connexion with him, and voted his name out of their minutes.

The same reason has been assigned in a pamphlet entitled, "Truth Discovered, by Rev. Thomas Morrell, E. M. E. church."

“ But you have struck Mr. Wesley’s name from your minutes, in 1787,” said Mr. Hammet, in his controversy with this gentleman. ‘ Yes,’ said Mr. Morrell, and the reasons were substantial ; and for the same causes, we struck it on again, in 1789. Early in 1787, Mr. Wesley intimated a design of removing Mr. Asbury from America to Europe, and of sending us a superintendent of his *own* nomination. When the conference assembled, some of the eldest and most sensible of the elders observed that Mr. W. had no authority to remove Mr. A. much less could he *impose* a superintendent on us without our choice ; for it was written in our constitution, ‘ that no person should be ordained a superintendent over us, without the *consent* of the majority of the conference ; that no such consent had been given ; that though they highly venerated Mr. Wesley, and were willing to receive his advice, and preserve and promote our union with him and our Methodist brethren in Europe, as far as the political interest of our country would authorise us ; yet, they could not give up their rights to any man on earth. And after a number of arguments to shew the impropriety and impolicy of *any man* having the power to exercise such an uncontrollable and unlimited authority over us as Mr. Wesley wished to do ; and to prevent him from exercising this power in the present case, by virtue of his name standing at the head of the minutes, they moved it should be struck off. The vote was carried, and his name was omitted. Mr. W. complained we were ungrateful ; we felt ourselves grieved that the good old man was hurt, and determined to give him every satisfaction in our power, consistent with our rights ; and in 1789, the conference consented his name should be restored on the minutes, in testimony of our *union* with and *respect* for him ; but inserted in such a manner, as to preclude him from exercising an unconstitutionable power over us.” pa. 16 17.

Although it has been asserted in the above extracts, that the conference disowned Mr. Wesley’s authority and omitted his name, because he had appointed Mr. Whatcoat a superintendent, yet we must beg leave to say we cannot believe that this was the reason. That this may have been the ostensible cause, we readily admit. And that those who have given it, may have believed it to be the sole cause, we will allow. But with all due deference for the opinion of those who may be supposed to have had much better means of information respecting this matter, we shall proceed to shew the reasons for our dissent. 1st. Mr. Wesley says, “ I desire that Mr. Whatcoat may be appointed a superintendent.” This is Mr. Wesley’s language ; and this is the sum total of his offence. It will be seen then, that *he* does not “ appoint” Mr. Whatcoat a superintendent. but simply expresses a “ *desire*” that he “ may be appointed” one. 2. But allowing that expressing this “ desire” is tantamount to the act of appointing him, what was there culpable in his doing so ? Would not the age, the piety, the wisdom, the experience of Mr. Wesley justify him, as the father of the Methodist people, in giving them a word of advice, even if that advice had been perfectly gratuitous. And would not a people who were so

young, and so inexperienced, as the Methodists in this country were at that time, be thankful for the advice of a person of his years and experience, if they had been influenced by a proper spirit? 3 But it was not a gratuitous act; it was not a voluntary tender of an opinion, nor an obtrusive officiousness, on the part of Mr Wesley; but it was an imperious act of duty, growing out of the relation in which he stood to them. Let it be distinctly remembered, that he had been repeatedly solicited to provide ministers for the American societies, and that he had been assured that "*those societies wished to be under his care.*" That at the general conference of 1784, the preachers renewed these assurances, and declared that "during the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel, ready in matters belonging to church government, to obey his commands." Now if all the former protestations were made with any other view, than merely to prevail on Mr. Wesley to give them ordination; or if the resolution of the conference was passed in good faith, we see not how Mr Wesley could suppose that expressing such a desire as this, would bring down upon him the displeasure of the conference, or that from such an appointment, he could anticipate such a dreadful punishment as an expulsion from their minutes.* Indeed had he not manifested his fatherly concern for their welfare, in some way or other; had he not given some evidence that their prosperity lay near his heart; had he been totally silent upon those matters that vitally affected their interests, then they might, with a greater shew of justice, have construed his silence into indifference or neglect, and declared that a name, which was in no respect, serviceable to them, should be struck off their minutes. 4. But, suppose, for argument sake, that Mr. Wesley had committed an offence by making the appointment, did his offence merit such treatment? Was there in the eye of justice, no disproportion between the punishment and the crime? Upon this point, we are confident there will be, there can be, but one opinion. Had Mr. Wesley, in his zeal to serve the American connexion, exceeded their wishes, and encroached upon what the conference considered their "rights," could not the conference have remonstrated with him upon the subject? Could they not have communicated their sentiments before they proceeded to such extremities? And could they not have informed him that they held those rights sacred, and that he must not pretend to encroach upon them; nor think of doing so with impunity? Yes, they could have done this, and a great deal more, if they had been inclined to do so, or if a determination had not been previously formed to get rid of him and his authority as quick as possible.

A fourth reason is connected with the following "Address of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church," to General Washington, (See *Arminian Magazine*, vol. 1, page 294-6.) and the treatment Dr. Coke received on his return to England, from Mr. Wesley and the English conference, in consequence thereof.

*See No. 3, Appendix.

" *To the PRESIDENT of the UNITED STATES.*

" SIR—We, the bishops of the Methodist episcopal church, humbly beg leave, in the name of our society, collectively, in these United States, to express to you the warm feelings of our hearts, and our sincere congratulations, on your appointment to the presidency of these States. We are conscious from the signal proofs you have already given, that you are a friend of mankind; and under this established idea, place as full a confidence in your wisdom and integrity, for the preservation of those civil and religious liberties which have been transmitted to us by the providence of God, and the glorious revolution, as we believe, ought to be reposed in man.

We have received the most grateful satisfaction, from the humble and entire dependence on the Great Governor of the universe, which you have repeatedly expressed, acknowledging him the source of every blessing, and particularly of the most excellent constitution of these States, which is at present the admiration of the world, and may in future become its great exemplar for imitation: and hence we enjoy a holy expectation that you will always prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion; the grand end of our creation and present probationary existence. And we promise you our fervent prayers to the throne of grace, that God Almighty may endue you with all the graces and gifts of his Holy Spirit, that may enable you to fill up your important station to his glory, the good of his church, the happiness and prosperity of the United States, and the welfare of mankind.

Signed in behalf of the Methodist episcopal church.

THOMAS COKE.

FRANCIS ASBURY,

New York, May 19th, 1789.

TO WHICH THE PRESIDENT WAS PLEASED TO GIVE THE FOLLOWING ANSWER.

To the BISHOPS of the Methodist episcopal church, in the United States of America.

GENTLEMEN—I return to you individually, and through you, to your society collectively, in the United States, my thanks, for the demonstration of affection, and the expressions of joy offered in their behalf, on my late appointment. It shall still be my endeavour to manifest the purity of my inclinations for promoting the happiness of mankind; as well as the sincerity of my desires to contribute whatever may be in my power towards the preservation of the civil and religious liberties of the *American* people. In pursuing this line of conduct, I hope by the assistance of Divine providence; not altogether to disappoint the confidence which you have been pleased to repose in me. It always affords me satisfaction, when I find a concurrence in sentiment and practice between all conscientious men in acknowledgments of homage to the Great Governor of the universe, and in professions of support to a just, civil government. After mentioning that I trust the people of eve-

ry denomination who demean themselves as good citizens, will have occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion ; I must assure you in particular, that I take in the kindest part, the promise you make of presenting your prayers at the throne of grace for me, and I likewise implore the Divine benedictions on yourselves and your religious community.

G WASHINGTON.

The first remark we shall make respecting this address, is this : That we have no evidence that the title of bishop was publicly assumed before this time : perhaps it was thought, that the dignified character they were about to approach, and the occasion, required the superintendents to appear in their best dress, and take the title of "bishops." *Secondly.* Although this address is dated New York, May 19th, 1789, we have evidence it was presented to General Washington, before Doctor Coke left the United States, in 1785. "From the official situation in which he (Dr. Coke) was placed by Mr. Wesley, on his arrival in America, he thought himself under a moral necessity of joining in an address to General Washington, as President of the American congress, in behalf of all the Methodists in the United States.

"The various addresses thus presented, soon found their way into the American newspapers, and in these papers they were brought across the Atlantic. Among these addresses there was none that attracted the attention of the English Methodists so much, as that which bore the signatures of Doctor Coke and Mr. Asbury, as superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal church in the United States of America." *Drew's Life of Doctor Coke*, London ed. page 143, et seq. *Thirdly.* On his return to England, "a copy of this address was introduced as a ground of censure against the Doctor." *Fourthly.* "Under these circumstances, as some decisive steps were necessary to be taken in this critical affair, it was finally determined that the name of Doctor Coke should be omitted in the minutes for the succeeding year." *ibid.* It was accordingly omitted. *Fifthly.* General Washington's answer to this address is published in *Drew's Life of Doctor Coke*, page 106, and with the exception of one word, agrees with the above answer, taken from the *Arminian Magazine*. From all these facts, it is evident that the *date* of this address was altered. It was presented before the Doctor left the United States, which was on the 3d day of June, 1785, and yet, when it was published, it is dated about four years after the answer to it was given ; nor does the answer bear a date. And this is not all : the original address was presented to "General Washington, President of the American Congress"—the above is directed "To the President of the United States." When it is a well known fact that General Washington was not President of the United States, until after the confederation of the States, and the adoption of the Constitution, which took place in the year 1788.

By whom these alterations were made, and for what purposes, it is not for us to say. Some may suppose that Mr. Asbury, who was coupled with the Doctor in presenting the address, hearing of the punishment inflicted upon Dr. Coke, felt alarmed; and that some of his friends apprehending that he also might be called to account for it by Mr. Wesley, resolved to prevent it, and as a measure of precaution or retaliation, disowned his authority, and voted his name out of the American minutes. And having, in this way, annihilated Mr. Wesley's authority, it next became necessary to change the date &c. of the address, that the assumption of the title of bishop might not appear to be the cause of such an ungrateful, if not cruel act. It is however worthy of remark, that as soon as Mr. Wesley's name was restored to the minutes, this address was published!

In the midst of such a vast range for conjecture, it would not be proper for us to say what were the reasons which led to this result. We therefore explicitly state, that we do not undertake to determine on this point; nor say by whom this thing was done. All we are certain of is, that Mr. Wesley's authority was disowned by leaving his name out of the minutes;—the conference receded from the engagements which they entered into in the year 1784,—and a schism was created in the Methodist connexion. What Mr. Wesley thought of this treatment from his sons in the gospel, we learn from a letter he wrote respecting their proceedings. An extract of which is subjoined.

“London, October 31st, 1789.

“My Dear Brother:—

The point which you desire my thoughts upon, is doubtless of no common importance. And I will give you my settled thoughts concerning it without the least disguise or reserve. Indeed this has been always my manner of speaking when I speak of the things of God. It should be so now in particular, as these may probably be the last words that you will receive from me.

It pleased God sixty years ago, by me, to awaken and join together, a little company of people at Oxford, and a few years after, a small company in London, whence they spread throughout the land. Some time after, I was much importuned to send some of my children to America, to which I cheerfully consented. God prospered their labours: but they and their children still esteemed themselves one family; no otherwise divided, than as Methodists on one side of the Thames are divided from the other. I was, therefore, a little surprised when I received some letters from Mr. Asbury, affirming, that no person in Europe knew how to direct those in America. Soon after, he flatly refused to receive Mr. Whatcoat in the character I sent him.

He told George Shadford, ‘Mr. Wesley and I are like Cæsar and Pompey—he will bear no equal, and I will bear no superior.’ And accordingly he quietly sat by, until his friends, by common consent, voted my name out of the American minutes. This completed the matter and shewed he had no connexion with me.”

SECTION IV.

Hitherto we have directed our attention to what we suppose was the fact, that Mr. Wesley believed the identity of bishops and presbyters; and that he did not intend by appointing Dr. Coke a superintendent, to create a third order, or institute for the societies an episcopal form of church government. And, in contemplation of this fact, we have offered such arguments and adduced such proofs only, as were calculated, in our opinion, to establish that point. But, if we turn our attention to the view which is entertained by those brethren, who insist on the admission of a third order of ministers in the Methodist episcopal church, it will afford some entertainment to the reader to see the different points of light, in which this officer is viewed, and the various sources from whence he is said to have derived his authority.

To begin with Mr. Wesley. He had been convinced, he tells us, by reading "Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain." Therefore, in the letter of appointment which he gave Dr. Coke, when he set him apart for a special work, he styles him simply, a superintendent. Lest, however, the Doctor or any other person, should mistake his design in laying hands on him, and lest this act, indicative of transferring his superintending care, should be misconstrued or magnified into the making of a bishop or the creating of a third order, "Mr. Wesley enjoined the Doctor and his associates in the most *solemn manner*, that the title of bishop should not be taken." Moore's life of Wesley, vol. 2, page 279. This being the case, it is surely not unreasonable to suppose, that Mr. Wesley explained to the Doctor, the nature of the duties he was selected to perform, and the extent of the authority with which he was invested: and it is far more likely that this was done, and the above prohibition imposed at the time the Doctor was appointed, than that it was delayed to a subsequent period. If this be natural and reasonable, is it not likely that this "solemn injunction" was communicated to Mr. Asbury also? We think it was. For surely, it cannot be supposed, that Mr. Wesley would have written in such a style and have used such remarkably strong and severe terms, to Mr. Asbury, as he does in his letter of September 20th, 1788, if he had not seen that all his previous "injunctions" and remonstrances had been utterly disregarded.

As Mr. Wesley was guided in his opinions by Lord King's Account of the Primitive Church, we here offer a few extracts from the works of this learned and impartial writer. "A *presbyter*," says he, "*is a person in holy orders, having thereby an inherent right to perform the whole office of a bishop; but being possessed of no place or parish, nor actually discharging it, without the permission and consent of the bishop of a place or parish.* But, lest this definition should seem obscure, I shall illustrate it by the following instance. As a curate hath the same mission and power

with the minister whose place he supplies ; yet being not the minister of that place, he cannot perform there any acts of his ministerial function, without leave from the minister thereof ; so a presbyter had the same order and power with the bishop whom he assisted in his cure ; yet being not the bishop or minister of that cure, he could not there perform any part of his pastoral office, without the permission of the bishop thereof. So that, what was rendered bishops, priests and deacons, would be more intelligible in our tongue, if we did express it by rectors, vicars and deacons ; by rectors, understanding the bishops, and by vicars, the presbyters : the former being the actual incumbents of a place, and the latter curates or assistants, and so different in degree, but yet equal in order.

“ Now this is what I understand by a presbyter ; for the confirmation of which there are two things to be proved.

1. That the presbyters were the bishop’s curates and assistants, and so inferior to them in the actual exercise of their ecclesiastical commission.

II. That, yet notwithstanding, they had the same inherent right with the bishops, and so were not of a distinct specific order from them. Or more briefly thus :

1. That the presbyters were different from the bishops *in gradu*, or in degree : but, yet, 2. they were equal to them *in ordine*, or in order.”

In going on to prove those points the writer remarks. “ But though the presbyters were thus different from the bishops in degree, yet they were of the very same specific order with them, having the same inherent right to perform those ecclesiastical offices, which the bishops did, as will appear from these three arguments. 1. They discharged all those offices which a bishop did ; for a presbyter, by his ordination, had as ample an inherent right and power to discharge all ecclesiastical offices, as any bishop in the world had. A bishop preached, baptized and confirmed, so did a presbyter. A bishop excommunicated, absolved and ordained, so did a presbyter. Whatever a bishop did, the same did a presbyter. The particular acts of their office were the same ; the only difference that was between them, was in degree ; but this proves there was none at all in order. 2. They were called by the same titles and appellations as the bishops were. And 3. They are expressly said to be of the same order with the bishops. It is expressly said by the ancients, that there were but two distinct ecclesiastical orders, viz bishops and deacons, or presbyters and deacons ; and if there were but these two, presbyters cannot be distinct from bishops, for then there would be three. That there were but two orders, viz bishops and deacons is plain from that golden ancient remain of *Clement Romanus*, where he thus writes. *In the country and cities where the Apostles preached, they ordained their first converts for bishops and deacons over those who should believe.* Epis. ad Corinth. pa. 54. Now, if they ordained but these two, I think no one had ever a com-

mission to add a third, or to split one into two, as must be done, if we separate the order of presbyters from the order of bishops."— Lord King. pa. 75.

But some one may inquire, how was a bishop appointed, constituted or inducted? Lord King shall answer this question likewise. "When a parish or bishopric was vacant through the death of the incumbent, all the members of the parish, *both clergy and laity* met together in the church, commonly, to choose a fit person for his successor, to whom they might commit the care and government of their church." page 46. "When the *people* had thus elected a bishop, they presented him to the neighbouring bishops for their approbation and consent; because, without their concurrent assent, there could be no bishop legally instituted or confirmed." page 47. "A bishop being thus elected and confirmed, the next thing that followed was his ordination or instalment, which was done in his own church by the neighbouring bishops; as *Cyprian* mentions some bishop in his time, who went to a city called *Capse* to install a bishop; whither when they were come, they took the bishop elect, and in the presence of his flock, ordained or installed him a bishop of that church by the imposition of hands." page 49.

On these extracts we remark, 1. If Mr. Wesley was convinced of the identity of bishops and presbyters by reading such passages as the above; and yet, with this very book of Lord King in his hand, intended to create a *third order*, when he believed that there were but two, he has given unquestionable evidence, *ipso facto*, of the want of consistency and his authority should have been rejected altogether rather than have been produced for our episcopacy. But from the charge of inconsistency we wish to rescue his memory. He has given no ground to his greatest enemy to fix upon his character so foul a stain. 2. It is worthy of notice, that there is not in this quotation a single word about *divine right*, or *apostolical succession*; but the rights of bishops are made to rest on ecclesiastical usage, and this usage embraced the *suffrage* of "the clergy and laity." 3. Whatever stress there may be laid on the imposition of hands, it is very evident, that this circumstance was not sufficient to create a distinct order. Presbyters were installed, or placed over a church or congregation by this ceremony, and yet as it respects *order*, were no more than presbyters still.

The next to Mr. Wesley is Dr. Coke. We shall therefore introduce him, and hear what he says. "He," Mr. Wesley, "did indeed solemnly invest me *as far as he had a right so to do*, with episcopal authority." And yet, notwithstanding this assertion, Mr. Wesley reproves the Doctor in the following language, "how can you, how *dare* you suffer yourself to be called a *bishop*!" Whether the Doctor understood this investiture to constitute a *third order*; or whether he understood it to be an appointment for a special work, he does not say. Two things, however, are obvious. 1. He ascribes the act of investing him with "episcopal authority" to Mr. Wesley. Now, as no stream can rise higher than its fountain, and as Mr. Wesley was only a presbyter of the church of England,

he could not confer what he did not possess. 2. Mr. Wesley's act, in the Doctor's own opinion, had its limitations and restrictions, for he adds "as far as he had a right so to do." Still, there is nothing about *divine right*, *apostolic authority*, or *uninterrupted succession*.

The third writer we shall notice is the Rev. Thomas Morrell, who holds the following language in his pamphlet in controversy with the Rev. Mr. Hammet. "When Mr. Wesley framed the constitution of our church, he ordained Dr. Coke a superintendent of the said church: now observe, Dr. Coke had been before ordained both a deacon and elder. Further, Dr. Coke had the orders of Mr. Wesley to ordain deacons, elders and a superintendent in America; and in virtue of this direction, he did actually ordain these *three orders* at Baltimore. Once more, in our ordination office inserted in the Prayer Book, we have the manner, in which each of these *three orders* are to be ordained, the questions to be asked, and the reply they are each to make, and all this compiled and composed by Mr. Wesley himself; and distinct ordination proves a different degree of order, if Mr. Wesley's conduct is to be admitted in proof." pa. 39.

On this extract, we shall remark. 1. That Mr. Morrell carefully avoids using the term *bishop*, although it was introduced into the minutes of conference, and we believe into the Book of Discipline, long before his pamphlet was written. 2. At the time he wrote his book, he had, we presume, no knowledge of the "*solemn injunction* imposed by Mr. Wesley, on Dr. Coke and his associates, that the title of bishop should not be taken." Either names alter the nature of things, or Mr. Morrell was mistaken in his reasoning: and subsequent events prove this to be the case. For Mr. Wesley will surely be allowed to be more capable of explaining his own views and conduct, than Mr. Morrell was. In his letter of reproof to Mr. Asbury, he expresses himself thus: "One instance of this your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called a bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought. Men may call me a *knave* or a *fool*, a *rascal*, a *scoundrel*, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me a *bishop*." 3. Inasmuch as Mr. Asbury, in enumerating his authorities (see page 54) in support of his episcopal claims, has made no reference to Mr. Wesley, nor to the abridged copy of the Prayer Book, he could not have supposed, that the Prayer Book and its abridged form of ordination, furnished evidence that Mr. Wesley intended to create a third order. 4. Mr. Morrell is the first who has unequivocally asserted that there are *three orders* in our church, superintendents, elders and deacons. And he affirms, also, that "distinct ordination proves a different order," the assertion of Lord King, and we think, we may add Mr. Wesley, to the contrary notwithstanding. 5. For the Methodist societies in England and Scotland, Mr. Wesley ordained ministers; one of whom he styled a superintendent. For the American societies he ordained ministers, one of whom he styled a superintendent.—To the societies in Scotland he sent the Prayer Book, but

they refused to accept it; although they were thankful to him for sending them ordained ministers. To the societies in America he sent the Prayer Book also. Did he, in the one case intend to create a "third order" and establish an *independent* Methodist episcopal church? And did he in the other case not intend to create a "third order" and establish an independent Methodist episcopal church? The cases are precisely alike, and Mr. Wesley's intentions we presume were precisely the same. As he did not intend to create a third order in the one case, neither did he in the other. And as he expected and desired that the societies in Scotland would remain in union with him, so did he expect that the American Methodists would remain in union with him also.

The next in order after the Rev'd. Mr. Morrell, is the Rev'd. William Phoebus. This gentleman "wrote an apology for the right of ordination in the evangelical church of America. called Methodists." Not having his pamphlet, we quote from "Myles's history of the Methodists," page 164. "The Methodists, in America, have as good a presbyterian ordination as any in the world, (for a sufficient number of presbyters have been always present, at the time of ordaining, from the day we first began until now.) And as good an episcopal ordination as any in the world, while one of father Wesley's successors is with her (i. e. with the church) vested with apostolic authority, being in a land where merit may rise. I exhort my brethren to be courageous, and never to be ashamed of our apostle WESLEY, and to keep an eye to that succession, and know, and let the people know, that God has given power to his ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the privileges of the gospel."

"Speaking of the fact, he says Mr. Wesley did, in the presence of a sufficient number of presbyters and brethren, after supplication and prayer to the adorable Trinity, set apart and consecrate Thomas Coke, a presbyter, a man who had embarked in the same good cause, and counted his good name among the world, his literary qualifications, his ease, his wealth, his all on earth, but dung and dross, that he might win souls to Christ, and be found in his righteousness. Him he ordained his apostle or messenger to us, with outlines of advice for us to adopt, as we saw most conducive to the general good, *recommending to us the New Testament for our pattern.*

Then with his power, and the fear of God, we assembled at the city of Baltimore in the state of Maryland, and received Thomas Coke, L. L. D. with his testimonials, from the greatest man to us in the world. He proceeded to form the first church that ever was organized under a pure *republican* government, and the first that was ever formed in this happy part of the world.

There were branches of different churches in America before, but all were formed in Europe, as witness their title, viz. Westminster, Scotch, Heidelberg, Church of England, German Church, Moravian, &c. &c.

In the year of our Lord 1785, and in the ninth year of the Independence of the United States, on the first day of January, we

thought it not robbery to call our society a church, having in it, and of it, several presbyters and a president. Francis Asbury was ordained deacon ; having used the office sometime, was ordained a presbyter ; having used that office well, was accounted worthy of double honour ; and consecrated prime minister of the Methodist episcopal church in America."

Every one will readily perceive, how the subject swells in grandeur and importance as we get along ; and how each consecutive writer contributes his part, to make "our blushing honours grow thick upon upon us." Commencing with *two* orders, we soon arrived at a *third* ; and plain John Wesley, the fountain of our episcopal authority is, in a little while, improved into "*Father Wesley*," and then again into our "*Apostle Wesley*," and some delicate allusions are made to "succession" and "apostolic authority." But, notwithstanding Dr. Phoebus's piece is bespangled with all these pretty fine things, the Rev'd. Mr. Bangs does not seem satisfied with it. Not, because too much was said by Dr. Phoebus in favor of our episcopacy, which is of that peculiar description that it partakes of a "presbyterian ordination as good as any in the world ;" and "an episcopal ordination as good as any in the world ;" but because he failed to set forth our bishops in their proper character. We next turn to Mr. Bangs.

"The second officer in the church, in the order of the ministry is *elder* or *presbyter*, and who is sometimes called *bishop*. That those denominated *bishops*, *elders* or *presbyters* in the apostolical writings, were one and the same order of men, we will now endeavour to demonstrate." Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy. page 19. Again he says "a *third order* in the church, called evangelists, were the immediate successors of the Apostles." page 42. "These evangelists were, in the apostles' days, an order of ministers superior to the elders, and who extended their oversight to the whole church." page 27. "And this order of men bore the same relation to the primitive church that the bishops of the Methodist episcopal church do to their church." page 46. "The primitive church had its itinerating apostles, and superintending evangelists as their aids and successors : that we have a grade of ministers in our church, *which very much resembles* them, is a fact, which needs but little proof to make it evident. The Methodist bishops are itinerating ministers, who travel through the whole work, and are therefore able to take an impartial and responsible oversight of the whole church, ministers and people. The primitive evangelists ordained elders in every city—our itinerating bishops do the same."* page 49.

However specious this hypothesis of the Rev'd. Mr. Bangs may appear, and however striking the similarity between a primitive evangelist and a Methodist bishop may be considered, it is liable to several objections. 1. It supposes that the *ordinary* ministers of our church, "very much resemble" the *extraordinary* ministers of

*This doctrine has been recently advanced with a great shew of learning, Hebrew and Greek being summoned to its support, in the Methodist Magazine.

the church of Christ at its establishment ; or rather, are of the same order with them. " The *extraordinary* teachers, whom Christ employed to lay the foundation of his kingdom, were the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples. To these, the *Evangelists* are to be added, by which title those were distinguished, whom the apostles sent to instruct the nations." Wesley's church history. vol 1. page 55. 2d. It affirms that the evangelists were " successors" of the apostles. when nothing can be clearer, we think, than that they were contemporary with them. As their powers, like those of the apostles were *extraordinary*, their office too was *temporary*. Consequently they could be no precedent for an order of ministers in our church. 3. It is contrary to matter of fact recorded in scripture history, by which we are authorised to say that there were but *two orders* of ministers in the primitive church, deacons, and presbyters or bishops. 4. Because it asserts that the evangelists were a distinct order from deacons and presbyters, and superior to both ; whereas Philip the *evangelist* was one of the seven *deacons*. Acts XXI. ch. ver. 8. " The evangelists and teachers, who are often spoken of in the Acts and epistles, were *inferior* both to the apostles and prophets, and consequently were of the *lowest order*." Potter, page 210. 5. Because it affirms that the evangelists were " *continually* moving from place to place," having no charge of any one particular congregation, but " extending their oversight to the whole church." Whereas, Philip the evangelist, *resided* in Cesarea with his family. Compare Acts XXI. ch. 8 ver. with Acts VIII. ch. 40 ver. See, also, Dr. A. Clarke's note on the latter text. And we have no information that Philip extended his " oversight" to any one particular congregation, much less " to the whole church." 6. Because it confounds the *orders*, by supposing that when a minister itinerated he was an *evangelist*, and was of the *third order*, as in the case of Timothy and Titus ; but when the same person was placed in charge of any one particular church or congregation, as Timothy was placed at Ephesus, and Titus left at Crete, then he was only of the *second order*, being only a presbyter or bishop. 7. Because it makes the difference in *order* to consist in itinerating, a thing which neither Mr. Bangs, nor any one else can prove.

After noticing the Rev'd. Mr. Bangs's theory, we shall introduce the Rev'd. Mr. Asbury. In his journals vol. 3. page 168, he writes thus " Wednesday 22 (May, 1805). We came away to the widow Sherwood's where I preached : I had a little time to read. In this state the subjects of *succession, rebaptizing*, are much agitated. I will tell the world what I rest my authority upon. 1. Divine authority. 2. Seniority in America 3. The election of the general conference. 4. My ordination by Thomas Coke, William Philip Otterbine, German Presbyterian minister, Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey. 5. Because the signs of an apostle have been seen in me." Great as our veneration for the memory of this good man is, and highly as we esteemed him in his life time, we cannot suffer ourselves to pass over this extract without making a few observations upon it. 1. We think it quite unnecessary to enter into any ar-

gument to prove, that by the phrase "my authority," Mr. Asbury did not mean an authority to preach God's word, but an authority to govern and act as a *bishop*. He is the first, then, who has ascribed episcopal power to "divine authority," and we are at a loss to know, in what way he conceived he became possessed of it. As he has neglected to inform us respecting this matter, and has given us neither chapter nor verse for what he says, we shall let it rest until some of the friends of the episcopacy shall supply this omission, and make us acquainted with the time, and place, and circumstances of his receiving this "divine" warrant. 2. "Seniority" alone bestows no ministerial qualification, nor have the general conferences acted on this principle in the choice of our bishops, nor the annual conferences in the choice of their representatives. And even if "seniority" would justify a claim to the office, others were entitled to it before him. Philip Embury and other *local preachers* laboured in the word and doctrine and had erected a meeting house in the city of New York before Mr. Asbury came to America. 3. Had the laity been united with the general conference in their election, it would have corresponded with Lord King's account of the induction of a primitive bishop; but as the laity had no share in the election, the general conference had no right to act in this matter for the church. 4. It seems somewhat remarkable, that Mr. Wesley's name should have been omitted in this catalogue; and that Mr. Asbury should seem inclined to acknowledge every other source from whence he could be supposed to derive his episcopal authority, but Mr. Wesley. Leaving Mr. Otterbine's name out of our remarks, as he did not belong to our church, two of the remaining three appear to be doubtful of the validity of their own ordination, and consequently of their right to ordain others. Dr. Coke's proposals to Bishop White of Philadelphia shall serve as proof of the first; and if we are correct in decyphering the name by the initials, we have proof in Mr. Asbury's Journals, that Thomas Vasey was as much dissatisfied, on this point, if not more so, than Dr. Coke himself.

"Pennsylvania—Wednesday 22, (June 1787.) We had a warm ride through a fertile pleasant country to Trenton; and on Thursday 28th to Philadelphia. Here I found T. V." (Thomas Vasey) "had scattered fire brands and thrown dirt to bespatter us." vol. 2. page 17. And again on the same page, he says "I find T. V." (Thomas Vasey) "has misrepresented us as having cast off Mr. Wesley, making this a plea for his re-ordination."

6. Passing over what we deem a logical inaccuracy, such a one as would put the effect for the cause, or assign the fruit of the tree as the cause of its productiveness, we shall notice what he says in his fifth reason, respecting "the signs of an apostle which have been seen in me." These signs were such as he possessed in common with other gospel ministers, or they were not. If they were, how could he appropriate to himself exclusively, what was common to all? If they were not, what were those signs of an Apostle to which he laid claim, and which were to be found in him alone? He pretended

to no supernatural visions nor revelations. He never professed to be able to cure the sick or raise the dead. We believe he never wrought any miracles-as the Apostles did,nor made any pretensions to be able to work them. That he was a great, wise, good, and useful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, having few to equal him, we feel a pleasure in declaring: but that he possessed any one of those *extraordinary* powers which were conferred on the apostles,or that he was called of God to do the special work which the Apostles were appointed to perform, we hope it will be considered no detraction from his well earned reputation, to deny.

Next to Mr. Asbury, comes the Rev^d. William McKendree, the senior bishop of the Methodist episcopal church. On the authority of "an old member of the Philadelphia conference," we give the following extract from bishop McKendree's address laid before the Philadelphia conference in May, 1822. "I believe the resolutions passed at the last general conference, authorising the respective annual conferences to elect the presiding elders, are an infringement on the constitution of the Methodist episcopal church. One of many reasons in support of this opinion is as follows: It is the duty of a bishop to travel through the work at large; to oversee the *spiritual* and *temporal* concerns of the church. But to oversee is to *OVERRULE*." Wesleyan Repository, vol. 2. page 385.

This extract is short, but it is pithy. It is small in size, but it is lofty in significance. Although much might be said on it, we shall make two remarks only. 1 It seems to intimate that a bishop's judgment is more correct and more to be relied on than the judgment of the majority of the general conference. This, with some, may be a thing of course; for it has been said "A saint in crape is twice a saint in lawn." This superior judgment is not a full and explicit avowal of *infallibility*, but it is an approximation to it. It places the decision of the senior bishop, above the general conference; as some Romish writers make the Pope's decision to be greater than that of a general council. 2. In the extract from Mr. McKendree's predecessor, we had "divine authority" for the exercise of episcopal power. Here we have that power, by the same authority we presume, extending its gracious and superintending care, not only to the *spiritual* concerns of the church, but *over-ruling* its *TEMPORAL* matters, also.

Finally, we shall make a passing remark on the "circular" of the general conference of 1824, which bears the signatures of the three bishops, William McKendree, Enoch George, and Robert R. Roberts. This document, which we wish our readers to consider as the principal exciting cause of this investigation, exceeds all that went before, and may in truth be said to cap the climax: * for we do not

*In a letter which we wrote to bishop George, two years ago, we expressed ourselves respecting this "Circular" in the following manner. "A paper drawn up by a committee of twelve preachers, discussed and approved by at least one hundred ministers in general conference, and bearing the signature of three bishops. In this document there are no more than *two subjects* noticed, MONEY and POWER, or the salaries of the preachers, and the

know how it is possible to go beyond the pretensions therein set forth. Let the "world" know then, that this document purports to be a reply to the numerous petitions which were sent from the local ministers and laymen of the church, praying for a representation in the general conference. In these petitions, the matters prayed for were asserted to be the "unalienable rights" of the petitioners. To which these three bishops reply in behalf of the said general conference, "PARDON US IF WE KNOW NO SUCH RIGHTS—IF WE COMPREHEND NO SUCH PRIVILEGES." Here, then, is the exclusive right of travelling preachers to legislate for the church, asserted: and local ministers and laymen, who are denied a participation in legislation, are reduced, in this respect, to the condition of slaves. We have often said to our friends, in remarking upon this declaration, that we wonder these three brethren were not ashamed to sign and send forth such a circular, to freemen in these United States. And as we never have allowed ourselves, since the day we knew the Lord, to make any observations respecting a person, behind his back, which we would be unwilling to make to that same person, to his face; we now say of these three brethren, we wonder they were not ashamed; and the only way we can account for their conduct in this instance, is this, that a *bishop's spirit came upon them*, and we have no where read, in ecclesiastical history, that bishops were ever very backward to assert their pretensions.

To recapitulate the leading points: every one will perceive with what rapidity we have advanced in our career of ambition and glory; and with what boldness the pretensions of our bishops have been set forth by themselves or their advocates. In forty years we have outstript Rome herself, in her march to grandeur; and it would seem, that what some writers have affirmed respecting the Western hemisphere, namely, that every thing in America is upon a larger and grander scale, and that the natural productions sooner arrive at maturity here, than on the Eastern continent, is to be verified in our church matters also. We began our church establishment a few years ago, and rested the foot of our ecclesiastical ladder upon Mr. Wesley's authority; but his authority was soon rejected. The first step of our ladder is the identity of bishops and presbyters, or *two orders*. The second, "episcopal authority" with limitations and restrictions. The third, *three distinct orders*. The fourth, a

right of the itinerant ministry to legislate for the church. And so intent was the general conference upon establishing this right, and so perfectly absorbed were their minds with this subject, that the name of God, of Jesus Christ* or the Holy Ghost, is not named in the circular. In it, there is no allusion to the doctrines of the fall, nor to the recovery of man by the death of Christ. The terms repentance, faith or holiness are not mentioned in it from beginning to end. There is not a single promise referred to as a motive to duty, or as an encouragement to perseverance; nor the slightest reference to heaven as the reward of the righteous. In it will be found no expression of thanksgiving to the great Head of the Church for past mercies; nor a word of prayer for future favors!!

* The invidious comparison made between the "love of Christ" and the "love of authority" cannot invalidate the above assertion.

"presbyterian ordination, and an episcopal ordination as good as any in the world." The fifth, Methodist bishops, "very much resemble" primitive evangelists. The sixth, "divine authority" for episcopal power. The seventh, a right "to overrule the spiritual and temporal concerns of the church." The eighth, "divine right" to legislate for the church to the exclusion of local preachers and laymen. By such steps have we advanced to the ground we now occupy; and time alone can develop what other steps may be added in the progress of the work. We have no idea, however, that the present bishops have found a stopping place; nor that they or their successors will voluntarily relinquish one particle of their authority. Indeed, we are rather inclined to think, they will still continue their exertions to ascend. And, that what was said of the bishops of another church, may be said by the future historian respecting them. "It is very remarkable that of the one hundred and fourteen Popes between Boniface III. who laid the foundation of the papal grandeur, and Gregory VII. who raised it to the highest pitch, not one ever lost an inch of ground his predecessor had gained." Bower's history of the Popes. Preface.

Before we dismiss this part of our subject, we shall anticipate an objection that may possibly be made against us, and answer it.—Some one may say, that by arguing against Methodist bishops being a third order, different from presbyters and superior to them, we are arguing against the validity of our own ordination; and the ordination among the Methodists. Not so, for according to our views of the nature and effect of an ordination, if the authority of the bishops, so called, in the Methodist episcopal church, was totally renounced, the validity of the ordination of all our ordained ministers would remain unimpaired; or, otherwise it must follow as an undeniable consequence, that there was no valid ordination in the primitive church, when there were but two orders of ministers. If the objection has any weight in the one case, it must have equal weight in the other; seeing there were but two orders in the church for upwards of three hundred years after Christ. That there were but two, viz. bishops and deacons, or presbyters and deacons, is a fact which we think is clearly established by ecclesiastical writers. And, although we do not know that this thing requires any further proof, we shall add a few more authorities to those which we have already given.

1. "The rulers of the church were called either presbyters or bishops, which two titles are, in the New Testament, undoubtedly applied to the same order of men." Mosheim, vol. 1. p. 99.

2. "It is certain the words, bishops and presbyters, are used promiscuously in the New Testament. Bishop Hoadly and Dr. Hammond both of them allow this: and it is Dr. Hammond's opinion, that there were only presbyters and deacons in each church at first." Doddridge's Lectures, vol. 2. pa. 339.

3. "As for Irenæus, I meet with no passage in him to prove that bishops and presbyters were distinct." *Ibid.* vol. 2. pa. 346.

4. "Polycarp exhorts the Christians at Phillippi to be subject to the presbyters and deacons; but, says not one word of any bishop

being then at Phillippi; nor gives any direction about choosing one. *Ibid.* pa. 347.

5 "I believe, upon the strictest inquiry, Medina's judgment will prove true, that Jerome, Austin, Ambrose, Sidulius, Primastus, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theophylact, were all of Arius's judgment as to the identity of both name and order of bishops and presbyters in the primitive church." Stillingfleet's *Iren.* page. 276.

6 "The Greek and Latin fathers, do, with one consent, declare the Apostle here calls their presbyters their bishops. So Chrysostom, Theodoret, Œcumenius, Theophylact, St. Jerome, Pseud-Ambrosius and Primastus." Whitby on Phill. 1 ch. 1 verse.

7. "Now, as these elders are called bishops in verse 28, we may take it for granted, that they were the same order: or, rather, that these superintendents of the church were indifferently called either presbyters or bishops." Dr. A. Clarke, on Acts 20. ch. 17. verse. See also verse 28.

8. "Lord King's account of the primitive church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order." Rev'd. John Wesley.

9. "John Wickliffe, the morning star of the reformation, who flourished about one hundred and thirty years before the reformation of Luther, is very positive with regard to the identity of the order of bishops and priests in the apostolic age. "One thing I boldly assert, that in the primitive church, or in the time of the apostle Paul, two orders of clergy were thought sufficient, viz. priest and deacon; and I do also say, that in the time of Paul, a priest and a bishop were one and the same; for in those times the distinct orders of Pope, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, officials, and deans, were not invented." Neal's *Hist. of the Puritans*, vol. 1. pa. 51.

"The first reformers believed there were but two orders in holy scripture, viz. bishops and deacons; and consequently that bishops and priests were but different ranks or degrees of the same order." *Ibid.*, pa. 123.

"Archbishop Usher says, "I have ever declared my opinion to be, that *episcopus et presbyter gradu tantum differunt, non ordine*, (a bishop and presbyter differ only in degree, not in order) and consequently, that in places where bishops cannot be had, the ordination by presbyters stands valid." "This was the constant sense of our first reformers, Cranmer, Pilkington, Jewel, Grindal, Whitgift, &c. and even of Bancroft himself; for when Dr. Andrews, bishop of Ely, moved that the Scots bishops elect might first be ordained presbyters, in the year 1610, Bancroft replied there was no need of it, since *ordination by presbyters was valid.*" *Ibid.* vol. 2. pa. 412.

Other names might be added to these authorities, but it is supposed these will suffice to establish the identity of bishops and presbyters; and the right of presbyters to ordain.

And, if it could be proved that bishops are a different order from presbyters and superior to them, what advantage would be gained thereby? We have already shewn the opinions of episcopalians

upon this subject. Are the Methodists prepared to subscribe to them? Do they think, "there is no valid christian ministry," without ordination by a person of the *third order*? Will they affirm, "no one has a right to execute the ministerial office, without having previously received a divine commission; and the exclusive right of granting this commission is vested in the bishops *as successors of the apostles*."? Will they publish to the world "no bishop, no church."? Can they plead for this third order, without connecting with it, the doctrines set forth in the above quotations, and many more? We think not. For, as the person who draws the first link of a chain necessarily drags all the other links after it; so does the advocate of a distinct order of bishops, superior to presbyters, necessarily involve in his plea, all the above consequences. Who, then, renders Methodism the greater service, we who plead for the parity of presbyters and bishops, and the consequent right of presbyters to ordain, or those who insist on the superiority of bishops to the order of presbyters, and pompously talk about "divine authority," and "apostolic succession"? Away with such childish things. The cause of holiness is not promoted by them. The success of the gospel does not depend upon them. Nor is any, nor all of these high sounding words of vanity the passport to those everlasting joys which are at God's right hand.

Still it may be a question with some, can there be an ordination without the imposition of the hands of a bishop? We think there can. For, whether we consider "the essence of ordination to consist in the setting apart a person by the imposition of hands;" or "the voluntary choice and call of the people," or both; it will not follow that a third order of ministers is necessary to ordain. See Buck's Theological Dictionary. Art. Ordination. See also Dr. A. Clarke on Acts 13. ch. 23 ver.

1. "When our Lord chose *the twelve*, that he might send them forth to preach, he is said to have *ordained* them: but the word *ποιοειν* imports no more than to constitute, appoint, elect, and there is not the slightest intimation that he used any ceremonious consecration." Isaac's ecclesiastical claims. p. 84.

2. "There is not the slightest evidence in the whole of the New Testament that the apostles ordained either co-adjutors or successors to themselves in the apostolic office." *Ibid.* pa. 86.

3. "It was the common practice of the apostles to put their hands on persons recently converted. Peter and John laid their hands on the disciples at Samaria, and they received the Holy Ghost. Paul laid his hands on all the disciples at Ephesus, and they received the Holy Ghost." pa. 95. "But, though we read of the apostles laying hands on persons recently baptized, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; and on the overseers of the poor, when elected to serve tables, we no where read of the laying on of their hands at the ordination of presbyters." *Ibid.* pa. 140.

4 "The only persons who conferred holy orders, that we read of, were Paul and Barnabas, Timothy and Titus: the two former were apostles, and the two latter were evangelists. And as the

apostles have said nothing about the necessity of ordination, nor who are to perform it, nor what rites and ceremonies are to be used in it, we may justly infer, it is a matter of no great moment." *Ibid.* pa. 145.

5. "Tertullian" quoted by arch-bishop Potter, page 154, "says, where no clergyman is present, laymen may baptize and celebrate the eucharist, the distinction between clergy and laity being of the church's appointing."

6 "Imposition of hands is not, certainly, essential to ordination; *it is not ordination itself*, but an expressive, significant act, by which ordination is indicated, a mode of doing that which may be otherwise done." English Methodist Magazine. vol. 48. pa. 184.

7. "Ordination was never deemed necessary to a preacher, till within a few years past. And St. Ambrose says, that in the beginning of Christianity, for the augmentation and increase of the church, a general commission was granted unto all, both to preach the gospel and baptize, and to explain the scriptures in ecclesiastical assemblies." Bingham's Antiquities, book 14. chap. 4.

8. "In the New Testament, he that is appointed to be a bishop or priest, *needeth no consecration* by the scriptures, for *election or appointing* thereto is sufficient." Stillingfleet's Iren. pa. 392.

9. "If we determine things by the importance of words, and things signified by them, the power of ordination was proper to the name *presbyter*, and not to the name *bishop*." Iren. pa. 286. Again "in the primitive church the presbyters all acted in common for the welfare of the church, and either did, or might ordain others to the same authority with themselves; because the intrinsic power of order is equally in them, and in those who were afterwards appointed governors over presbyters." Iren. pa. 273.

10. "A presbyter by his ordination had as ample an inherent right and power to discharge all clerical offices, as any bishop in the world had." And again, "presbyters were of the very same specific order with them (bishops) having the same inherent right to perform those ecclesiastical offices which the bishops did," Lord King. pa. 58.

11. "Bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain." Rev'd. John Wesley.

As a third order is unnecessary, and in our opinion, contrary to primitive ecclesiastical usage; it is a matter of surprise to us, that any attempt should ever have been made to foist it on us. To say that God would not have owned his word, or prospered his cause, if we had not assumed the episcopal form of church government, would not only be to attach an importance to a particular modification of government, for which we can produce no scriptural warrant, but it would be to limit the Holy One of Israel in his gracious operations. It would be to cast uncharitable and unjust reflections on other christian communities, who are opposed to episcopacy; and would not only give proof that we entertain very unworthy thoughts of the Deity, but would be falsified by the existence and prosperity of the Methodist connexion in Europe. As we have no evidence

that it has served, or can serve any good purpose, we think, it altogether unnecessary. But, as we believe it has been, and ever will be productive of evil, we think it ought to be abolished. That it has been an apple of discord, engendering strife and contention, we think is quite clear. And that it will ultimately be the means of severing the connexion, is, in our judgment, beyond a doubt. Under this deep impression, we would venture to entreat the men who fill the office, to hearken to the advice of Mr. Wesley, and "make a full end of this." We would beg them to come down from that elevation to which they have been raised. It only serves to make them dizzy; and is in fact, too high for them to be safe. The circular of the last general conference may serve as proof of the unhappy effects which their elevation has had upon their judgment; for their brethren, who petitioned to be represented in legislation, are pronounced to have "*no rights*," and seen at such a distance, are treated as if they were an inferior order of beings.



SECTION V.

Having given a view of the origin of our episcopacy, and the means which were used to give it currency with the people, we proceed now to shew that from its commencement, it has had a tendency to create dissensions and divisions among the bishops and travelling preachers, as well as among the societies. And in proof of this we submit the following facts.

First. The manner in which the Doctor discharged the duties of the new office he was appointed to fill, and the title of bishop which he assumed, in connexion with Mr. Asbury in their joint address to General Washington, president of the American Congress, involved him in difficulties, not only with Mr. Wesley and the British conference, as we have seen already, but with the American conference also. We have stated, that upon his return to Europe in 1785, he was impeached before the conference, and his name was left out of their minutes for one year.—Upon his return to the United States in, 1787, several complaints were preferred against him before the conference, held in Baltimore, the same year "The Doctor acknowledged his faults—begged pardon—and gave the conference the following certificate."

"I do solemnly engage, by this instrument, that I never will, by virtue of my office as superintendent of the Methodist church, during my absence from the United States of America, exercise any government whatever, in the said Methodist church, during my absence from the United States, And I do also engage, that I will exercise no privilege in the said church when present in the United States, except that of ordaining according to the regulations and laws already existing, or hereafter to be made in the said church, and that of presiding, when present in conference, and lastly that of travelling at large. Given under my hand, the second day of May, in the year 1787.

THOMAS COKE.

Witnesses, JOHN TUNNIL, JOHN HAGERTY, NELSON REED."

Lee's history of Methodism, pa. 125.

Whatever view others may take of this subject, we consider it to have been the effect of episcopacy, and to have grown out of a struggle for the exercise of episcopal prerogative, as appears from the face of the certificate; and it may be said, the unpleasant effects of it were never removed to the day of the Doctor's death.

Second. In the year 1789, a little more than four years after the introduction of episcopacy, "a plan was laid for holding a council. The bishops said they had made it a matter of prayer; and they believed it was the best plan they could think of." Lee, pa. 149. The object of having a council was to prevent the preachers from coming together in general conference, notwithstanding Mr. Wesley in his letter of Sept. 6th, 1786, had recommended that measure. And here by the way, in looking over the history of the council, which was pronounced by preachers, who were in favor of a general conference, to be an arbitrary and high handed measure, we are constrained to take notice that the powers claimed by the council, and those claimed by the general conference of 1824 are precisely the same: and that the arguments used on the former occasion to set forth those claims, and prevent a general conference of the preachers, do not differ in substance from those used by the general conference of 1824, against *representation*. There was, however, some opposition to the measure; but the movers of the plan had the high gratification of finding their projects succeed. The council accordingly met. They formed their *constitution*. They declared their powers, and plenary ones, it must be confessed, they were: for they declare "they shall have power to mature and resolve on *all things* relative to the *spiritual and temporal* interest of the church" Did those who profess to derive their authority in the church from St. Peter himself, ever claim more? Is it possible to claim more? Yet, strongly intrenched as they were behind their *constitution*, the council had only an ephemeral existence. It met, it is true, to meet again: but after the second meeting, it broke up to meet again no more for ever. "Their proceedings," says Lee, in his history of Methodism, pa. 158. "gave such dissatisfaction to our connexion in general, and to our travelling preachers in particular, that they were forced to abandon the plan, and there has never since been a meeting of the kind." And we may add, so offensive was the very name, that "the bishops requested that the name of the council might not be mentioned in the conference again." Thus ended a measure that gave great dissatisfaction—excited violent opposition from the travelling preachers and the laity—and threatened, for a while, the dissolution of the body and the overthrow of the episcopal government.

Third. From the time the preachers had assumed the name of the Methodist episcopal church, it had been customary for Mr. Asbury to appoint each one to his respective station or circuit, and no man had any right to question the propriety of the exercise of this power, or oppose the execution of this part of our discipline. This prerogative, the reader will recollect, was solemnly renounced by Dr. Coke in the certificate which he gave the conference; nor was

he ever afterwards allowed to resume it. But with Mr. Asbury the exercise of this power was never interrupted. He held this rein of government firmly in his own hand, sensible, no doubt, that as long as he had it in his sole power to give places to preachers, and preachers to whatever places he chose, he would never want men or means to carry into execution whatever measures he wished. To him, it belonged to send a preacher where he pleased ; and in a restricted sense, it was immaterial to him whether the preacher chose to go or not—whether he considered it convenient to go or not—or whether the place to which he was appointed to go, would agree with his health and constitution or not. This tremendous power over the comfort—the supplies—the health—nay the life and death of the preacher, began to be considered by the travelling preachers themselves, as too mighty to be exercised by any one man. If the objections entertained by the preacher against his appointment were ever so reasonable and just, it was altogether optional with the bishop, whether he would hear them or not. If he heard them, well : but if he did not choose to alter the appointment, the preacher had no alternative, but to go to his circuit or go home. To prevent the abuse of this tremendous power, and to give the preacher security against the exercise of it, Mr. James O'Kelly, a travelling preacher from Virginia, offered, in the general conference of 1792, the following resolution. "Resolved, after the bishop appoints the preachers at conference to their several circuits, if any one think himself injured by the appointment, he shall have liberty to appeal to the conference and state his objections : and if the conference approve his objections, the bishop shall appoint him to another circuit."

It is far from our intention, to enter into an examination of the merits of this resolution, or to shew the necessity or propriety of such a check on the bishop's power. Instead therefore, of offering our own speculations, we shall present the opinion of Dr. Coke respecting the subject of this resolution, and then give the words of the historian who was present and bore a part in the transactions of that day.

Dr. Coke says in a printed circular, dated Wilmington, Delaware, May 4th, 1791. "Five things we have in view. 1. The abolition of the arbitrary aristocracy. 2. The investing of the nomination of the presiding elders in the conferences of the districts. 3. The limitation of the districts to be invested in the general conference. 4. An appeal allowed each preacher on the reading of the stations. And 5. A general conference of at least two thirds of the preachers as a check upon every thing.

But a good superintendent will not do the wrong you fear. I answer a good superintendent is but a man, and man is fond of power. But a good superintendent may become a tyrant, or be succeeded by one. O stand up for liberty, be friends of mankind in all things."

Mr. Lee says "this motion brought on a long debate ; the arguments for and against the proposal were weighty, and handled in a masterly manner. There never had been a subject before us which

so fully called forth all the strength of the preachers." page 179.

In this memorable affair, Mr. M'Kendree, now our senior bishop, took a distinguished part : and it was on account of the rejection of this resolution that he withdrew from the connexion.* Through the course of this warm and protracted debate, he is represented to have been a strenuous advocate for the *appeal* ; and so hostile was he to the exercise of this power, by Mr. Asbury, without a check, that rather than submit to what he called tyranny,† he with Mr. O'Kelly and several other preachers chose to leave the church. For this step, we know, Mr. M'Kendree has been censured. But on what ground ? Surely it could not be considered a reflection upon his wisdom or discernment, to have perceived the evils which were likely to grow out of such unlimited power over the destinies of the preachers. Nor could he have been blamed for sympathising with the oppressed, or taking part with the "injured." Is his love for the itinerant cause liable to be questioned, when in the very body of the resolution for the appeal, the power to over rule the objections of the preacher, is vested in a conference of itinerant ministers ? If any blame will attach to him on the page of history,‡ we presume it will not be attributed to him for acting such a magnanimous part, and as a free citizen of the United States of America refusing to submit to such "arbitrary" and "tyrannical" rule : but because he receded from the lofty ground he then took, and afterwards allowed himself to receive and exercise that very power which he had so strongly condemned in Mr. Asbury. This *appeal* was the origin and cause of a secession from the Methodist episcopal church, of such great extent, that in less than five years, the minutes of conference exhibit a decrease of 20,000 members, which was about one third of the whole number in the connexion at that time.

4. There have been several other secessions since that period, in different parts of the United States. Some in Virginia—in Ken-

* "Sunday 25. Came to Manchester, W. M'Kendree and R. H. — sent me their resignation in writing." Asbury's Journal vol 2, pa. 148.

† A correspondent writes thus : "The Rev'd E. C. of the Philadelphia conference, has given, in the third volume of the Wesleyan Repository, pa. 303. some of the words which Mr. M'K. used in the debate. "*It is an insult to my understanding ; and such an arbitrary stretch of power, so tyrannical (or) despotic, that I cannot, (or) will not submit to it.*"

‡ "Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who succeeded to the pontificate that same year, under the title of Pius II. rendered his name much more illustrious not only by his extensive genius and the important transactions that were, carried on during his administration, but also by the various and useful productions with which he enriched the republic of letters. The lustre of his name was, indeed, tarnished by a scandalous proof of his inconstancy, or rather of his bad faith; for after having vigorously defended, against the pontiffs, the dignity and prerogatives of general councils, and maintained with peculiar boldness the cause of the council of Basil against Eugenius IV. he ignominiously renounced these generous principles upon his accession to the pontificate, and acted in direct opposition to them during the whole course of his administration." Wesley's Church History, vol. III. pa. 29.

tucky—in Ohio—in Pennsylvania—in New York—and in New England. But, last year, ministers and representatives from these several parties held a convention in the city of New York—united themselves under the name of the Methodist Society—and published a declaration of independence, their articles of religion, and the constitution of their church. All these, when taken collectively, go far to prove, that episcopacy, to say the least, has not the power to preserve the unity of the body in the bonds of peace. And we know it to be a fact, that several of these secessions had their origin in objections to the episcopal form of church government.

5. From the time that presiding elders were created, we believe, the order has not been very popular with some of the preachers; and of late years, the dislike has become so strong, and has spread so extensively throughout the societies, that now the abolition of the office of presiding elder is pretty generally desired. Against the power of the bishops to appoint them, many of the travelling preachers have been long clamorous. For twenty years, they have not failed to bring forward resolutions, in each general conference, to deprive the bishops of the right to appoint them, and to make them elective by the annual conferences. At the general conference of 1820, the matter was again introduced, and submitted to the consideration of a committee consisting of six, three of whom were chosen from the party in favor of the change, and three from the party opposed to it. This committee came to a compromise, and unanimously reported in favor of the bishops nominating three for every vacancy, out of which number the annual conference should elect one; and this measure had the hearty approbation of bishops George and Roberts. But, although the conference adopted the report by a very large majority, yet Mr. Soule, the bishop elect, and Mr. M'Kendree the senior bishop, protested against the proceedings of the general conference; and refused to abide by their decisions, the latter declared his intention of appealing to the annual conferences respecting the unconstitutionality of the measure. And thus, in addition to all the other divisions which we have already mentioned, we have one among the bishops themselves, and the members of the general conference; some of the preachers arraying themselves on the side of Mr. M'Kendree and Mr. Soule in favor of the bishop's right to appoint presiding elders—and others taking sides with Mr. George and Mr. Roberts against it. These resolutions, making the presiding elders elective, were suspended until the general conference of 1824, and they have remained in that state ever since. What Methodist does not know these things? And who is there that requires to be told that the bishops themselves, notwithstanding their pretensions to unanimity, are divided even now, two against three, and three against two? Such is the representation that has constantly been made to us, and such, we believe, to be a true representation.

Among the many proofs which might be adduced to establish this fact, we select and offer an official document, which bears the signatures of two of the bishops: and this surely will be consider-

ed the best evidence that the case will admit. In the "Christian Advocate," a *religious newspaper* printed at our book room in New York, for the Methodist episcopal church, we have the copy of a "letter from the Rev'd. Bishops George and Hedding to the president and members of the British conference, late in connexion with the Rev'd John Wesley," from which we make the following extract.

"DEAR FATHERS AND BRETHREN—From a concurrence of circumstances, which it is not necessary to explain, arising principally, however, from the unexpected failure of a full meeting of the episcopal board, it has been found inconvenient to elect and send a delegate to your conference the present year.

ENOCH GEORGE,
ELIJAH HEDDING."

New-York, May 17th, 1826.

With regard to this letter we say (1.) That it was published at the Methodist book rooms in England and in America, and sent to the four quarters of the globe; consequently it can be no secret, nor can it be deemed a crime for us to give the above extract a place in this essay. (2.) It appears to have been written and sent to the British conference, by two out of the five bishops of our church. (3.) As it bears the signatures of only two of the four who were present at the "episcopal board," it may be justly inferred that it was written and sent without the approbation of the other two; which, by the way, was not, in our opinion, very respectful to Mr. M'Kendree, and his episcopal colleague, Mr. Soule. But we shall leave the bishops to settle this matter among themselves. (4.) It may be asked why did not Mr. M'Kendree and Mr. Soule, concur in the measure adopted by Mr. George and Mr. Hedding? Every one will conclude there must have been some very weighty reasons which prevented them from co-operating with their brethren of the episcopacy, when it shall have been known that a resolution of the last general conference directed the sending of a delegate; and the want of this co-operation is proof of our statement. (5.) This letter was written as an apology for not sending a delegate to the British conference "the present year." (6.) And this failure, the writers tell us, "*arose from a concurrence of circumstances which it is not necessary to explain.*" And what do you think, reader, was this "concurrence of circumstances" respecting which you are left in the dark? We learn from good authority in the travelling connexion, that two of the board were for sending the Rev. ——— of South Carolina, a delegate to represent the American connexion in the British conference, and that the other two opposed it. Being equally divided in the board, and as each side was firm to its purpose and neither side would yield, there could be no election, and so the matter ended.

From the foregoing brief sketch of the origin of our episcopacy and the history of our church, we are led to the following conclusions:

1. We are obliged to declare, from a deep conviction of historic truth, that there exists not in the range of our research, any paper, letter or document to prove, that Mr. Wesley ever intended to constitute Dr. Coke or Mr. Asbury a *bishop*: or that he ever "recommended" or gave any "counsel," that the societies should "adopt the episcopal mode of church government in preference to any other." If there be such a paper, letter or document, we have never seen it: and if it exists, we conceive it is incumbent on the bishops to inform the church of its existence; and unless it be produced, we shall be obliged, however humiliating to us as belonging to the church, to believe, that the present form of government was surreptitiously introduced, and was imposed upon the societies under the sanction of Mr. Wesley's name.

But although, as we have said, we have no knowledge of the existence of any such document, nor of any such "counsel or recommendation" being given, we do know that Mr. Wesley gave some "counsel" that was never taken, and "recommended" certain measures which were positively rejected. Had his advice been taken, the term "*bishop*" would have been put away from amongst us.—Let the present bishops, then, conform to his recommendation. Let them give us evidence that they respect his counsel, by making "a full end to this thing." But unless they do it, in the name of goodness and truth, let them make no more reference to Mr. Wesley's "recommendation" or "counsel;" and until it is done let us hear no more about *Wesleyan Methodism*.

2. It may now be reasonably expected, that every member of the church will look for the establishment of the assertion, by clear and indubitable evidence, that Mr. Wesley "*recommended the episcopal mode of church government*" to the American Methodists. As for ourselves, though we are obliged to demur respecting this fact, yet we shall be glad, for the sake of all who have been concerned in making this statement, to find that the truth of it can be established. Until this is done, we shall take the liberty of proposing a question or two, to the conscience of every minister and member of our church, but particularly to the members of the next general conference. (1.) On the supposition, that there is no document to prove (and nothing short of a document will satisfy us) that Mr. Wesley *explicitly* "recommended" our present form of church government, does it accord with TRUTH to persist in publishing a statement which cannot be supported by evidence? How will travelling preachers answer either to God or man for their pertinacity upon this subject? Down to the present time we can readily find an excuse for them. They may not have adverted to this subject at all; or if they thought upon it, they may have dismissed it as a matter which they did not understand. Or they may have supposed, like ourselves, before we commenced this examination, that "Mr. Wesley did recommend the episcopal mode of church government," and that there were, somewhere or other, although we did not know where, documents in existence to prove this fact. But now, since the case is brought fully under their consideration, and fairly

submitted to them for proof, the members of the general conference will be inexcusable, if they continue to reiterate these statements without the necessary evidence. If they cannot prove what we require, let them retract what they have said, and build their episcopal edifice upon another foundation. (2.) To all, whether preachers or members, we would say, does it accord with Justice to be tributary to the support of any system which is built upon mere assertion, not sustained by any evidence whatever. A system which goes to deprive Christ's freemen and God's ministers of their rights, to gratify the ambition or uphold the authority of a few. Even Mr. Wesley's recommendation, feeble foundation as it would have been for such a system, cannot be exhibited. This we know is giving the subject a moral bearing and places it in a very serious light in the estimation of every good man. With such, the matter is resolvable into some such question as this. Shall I directly or indirectly, secretly or openly, defend another man in retaining what I am not sure he obtained by just and proper means? Shall I support him in his claims which go to deprive his neighbour of *his* rights, especially when the claims which have been set up cannot be established by the necessary vouchers? This is plain talk, and we design to be plain. We wish to bring the matter home to the bosom and conscience of every man in the church. We consider ourselves despoiled of our rights. We have never surrendered, bartered, sold, transferred, or given away what our travelling brethren claim; and we conceive they have no more right to take what they claim and legislate for us without our consent, than A. would have to take from B. a part of his farm, enclose it under a fence, and then say it was recommended to him to do so by C. or plead a "*divine right*" to his possession.

3. The history of the Methodist episcopal church presents a melancholy picture of strife and division; one upon which we could dilate; but we forbear. The truth is, from its organization down to the present time, it has been one continued scene of secret heart burning or open contention. It never had perfect peace, it never will have perfect peace under the present form of government. Let us not be censured, then, for exhibiting what we believe to be a plain and honest statement of facts; but let our censure be turned against the *cause* and let us all unite to put it away from us forever. We confess it affords our own mind no small degree of consolation, under the pain produced by the contemplation of this mortifying picture, to think, and the remark is particularly worthy of the attention of local ministers, because they have been represented by our travelling brethren as a set of restless, dissatisfied men; that in all the disputes and divisions, by which the church has heretofore been agitated and torn, the great body of local preachers have had no share. They submitted to the present order of things although they were degraded and proscribed. Whilst the many and warm disputes, which have taken place in the church, originated with, and were confined to the travelling ministers, and were entirely unconnected with the rights and privileges of either the laity or the local ministry.

4. The various dissensions which have arisen in the church among the travelling ministers, for the forty years during which we have been organised, might be sufficient, we would suppose, to convince any candid man, that the principles of our ecclesiastical polity are wrong. Instead of these dissensions becoming fewer or weaker, it is evident, that with the lapse of time, they are assuming a bolder character, and becoming more general in their extension and effects. The connexion is in fact now divided into two parties : and it would seem, that all that is wanting is for some one conference, under an influential and intrepid leader, to declare themselves competent to manage their own business in their own way, and a separation would be formally made, which would not only rive the connexion in two, but would reduce the bishops to the level of their brethren. To prevent a split, let our leading men take speedy and efficient measures to have the rights of all parties secured, and then we may reasonably hope that those terrible commotions, by which the church has been torn, will cease for ever.



CONCLUSION.

In the preceding pages, we have spread before our readers, such documents as were found to be connected with the origin of our episcopacy. We are sorry that this *expose* will not reflect much credit on those who were instrumental in saddling it upon us. We are persuaded that the impartial, intelligent and pious of other denominations will pronounce our episcopacy to be illegitimate ; and that the means, which were used to introduce it into the church, were neither fair nor honourable. Should this turn out to be the case, who will be ambitious of the title of a Methodist bishop ? Any man, who, under such circumstances, would allow himself to be called by that name, must, in our opinion, be strongly infected with an episcopal mania. Whether such will be found or not, we are well convinced, and perhaps others also may be convinced, by the foregoing documents, that the title and office ought to be repudiated. Should this opinion prevail, we would take the liberty of proposing some changes which ought to take place after the next general conference. In doing this, we wish it to be distinctly understood, that we are not authorised to speak for our brethren who are in favour of *representation*. The changes we propose, and the plan we offer, are entirely our own.

First. Let the name of bishop, and the episcopal office as it now exists among us, be put away for ever. In doing this, we shall comply with Mr. Wesley's advice to Mr. Asbury. "For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this." We shall then be more worthy the name of Wesleyan Methodists.

Second. Abolish the office of presiding elders.

Third. Let each annual conference be clothed with legislative powers, under the restriction of a *legitimate constitution*. For it is perfectly idle to think, that the North should make laws for the

South, or the South for the North. The East for the West, or the West for the East. In proof of this position we may adduce the conduct of the general conference, which, after all the severe reflections which had been cast upon Southern preachers, by preachers from the North, found it necessary to allow each annual conference to legislate for its members on the subject of slavery. Why not extend this privilege to the annual conferences in other matters also? We think it must be obvious, that the peculiar usages in the different sections of the work, and the local interests of the members of the church require such a change. Nor is there any advantage in confining legislation to the general conference, which can serve as an equivalent for the loss the circuits and stations sustain, and the great expense which is incurred by so many preachers attending the general conference. But these inconveniences would be obviated if the annual conferences were allowed to make their own laws. Besides, *representatives* could more easily attend their respective annual conferences, than they can go from the extreme parts of the work over such distances as lay between them and the general conference.

Fourth. Let each annual conference be composed of itinerant ministers who have travelled a given number of years; together with representatives from the local ministry and the laity. And let the preachers of each annual conference be stationed by their own superintendent, or by the superintendent and a committee of travelling preachers elected annually, from among themselves for that purpose.

Fifth. Let each annual conference elect its own superintendent, whose period of service should not continue longer than four years. But although this period may be fixed higher or lower, on no account should a superintendent be elected for life. If the office of a superintendent be deemed an honorable one, it should be open to all the qualified and worthy. If it be a laborious and irksome one, it should not be imposed upon a single individual as long as he lives. Being elected periodically he can travel at large through the bounds of his conference, and by that means render unnecessary the office of presiding elders. And were the superintendent elected by the travelling ministers and representatives of local ministers and laymen in conference assembled, his election would assimilate to the election of the superintendents or bishops in the primitive church.

Sixth. Let the general conference be composed of the superintendents, and a given number of representatives from the annual conferences. Let their attention be confined to doctrines, alterations, or amendments of the constitution, general missions, and such other business as cannot well be confided to any one annual conference. The qualifications of its members, and its powers and jurisdiction to be defined and settled by the constitution.

Seventh. Let the local ministers and the laity be represented in the legislative department of the church, whether legislation be assigned to the general, or annual conferences. On the other points which we have mentioned above, we place, comparatively, no stress. We therefore hope no attempt will be made to withhold represen-

tation from the laity, on account of any objections which may be made against the specified items of change. We are not tenacious of them. We are willing, if it should be thought best, to relinquish any, or all of them. But, *representation from the local ministry and laity*, by the help of God, we will never relinquish. This, with us, is a *sine qua non*. In our opinion it is absolutely and indispensably necessary to the purity and unity of the church. It is the inalienable right of every man. There is no principle in the New Testament which forbids it. It has been declared sacred by the usage of the primitive church; as has been abundantly proved in this work. That it has been recognised by the early Christians, will be denied by no one who has made himself acquainted with the subject. And we must add, that we find daily evidence of the necessity of the introduction of this important principle, for the restoration of the peace of the church, and the safety of its members. If we had no other instance to offer, the late Baltimore annual conference has furnished sufficient proof of the propriety of the measure; for they have suspended the Rev'd. Dennis B. Dorsey, a presbyter in the church and a member of their own body, whose moral and ministerial character was unimpeachable. This punishment was inflicted for no other reason but because he would not promise, not to have any agency in supporting or circulating the "Mutual Rights," a work which was originated expressly to advocate the rights of local ministers and laymen to representation, although the said Rev'd. D. B. Dorsey declared he could not in his judgment and conscience, make such a promise.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

TO THE REV'D. WILLIAM M'KENDREE, SENIOR BISHOP OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Baltimore, July 1st, 1826.

REV'D. SIR :—It is known to you, I presume, that of those who have advocated a representation of the laity and local ministry in the general conference, I am one ; and that I have contributed my feeble assistance to support and spread the Mutual Rights, in which the subject of representation has been so freely discussed. I do - ing this, I assure you, I have acted from a sense of duty, and therefore, if in an error, am rather to be pitied than blamed. Hitherto, however, I have not been convinced that I am in error ; nor have I seen any argument offered by our rulers to justify themselves in denying representation to the other branches of the church, except, only, those founded on *prescription*, as offered by the general conference of 1824 in their circular on the subject. From the time that this doctrine was published in that circular, I have been induced to examine, with a closer attention, “ the institutions of the church as we received them from our fathers,” and must say, I see the subject in a light very different from that in which it appeared to me before that time. I am about to commit to the press an outline exhibiting the result of this examination : but before I do so, I think it is a duty I owe to you and your colleagues in the episcopacy, to apprise you of my intention ; inasmuch as my conclusions may have an important bearing on the *office* which you hold in the church.

I beg you, my dear sir, to be assured, that nothing disrespectful is intended, either in the matter or manner of this communication. My sole object is to make this honest statement, and to obtain from you the desired information, on several points, if you can possibly give it. Because if I have been led into an error by the documents which I have in my possession, it is important, that that error should be counteracted, by other equally authentic documents, to which I have had no access. The points upon which I beg information are the following.

1. I desire to be informed whether you have ever seen the *original* letter written by Mr. Wesley "to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America," dated Bristol, Sept. 10th 1784. If you have seen it, whether the *whole* of it has been printed? And if the whole of it was not printed, whether a copy of it can now be procured?

I make this inquiry because I have a document in my possession in which it is asserted, that that letter was mutilated, and that only a part of it was given to the public.

2. Whether you have ever seen any document or letter written by Mr. Wesley in which he *explicitly* "recommended" to the Methodist societies in America the adoption of "the episcopal mode of church government," according to the statements made in the minutes of conference for 1785, and the book of discipline. If so, can a copy of it be obtained?

3. Whether there is any paper to be found in which Mr. Wesley gave "counsel" to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury or any other person or persons to ordain a third order of ministers in our church, meaning by that phrase, an order of bishops distinct from, and superior to an order of presbyters? If so, can that paper be produced?

4. Are you able to inform me in what year Mr. Wesley's name was left out of the minutes? At what conference was the vote taken? By whom it was done? And for what reasons?

In asking information upon the above points, permit me to propose them to your consideration, as being connected with the office you fill, and with the address to the members of the church which bears your signature in the Book of Discipline. And that no blame may attach to me hereafter on account of reservation, I deem it proper frankly and fully to state the results to which my investigation has conducted me. I candidly say, then, that I cannot believe from the testimony of any or all the documents which I have been able to peruse, that Mr. Wesley ever *recommended the episcopal mode of church government to the American Methodists*. I cannot believe he ever gave them any "counsel" to create a third order of ministers as distinct from, and superior to the order of presbyters. But I am forced to believe, that the present form of government was surreptitiously introduced; and that it was imposed upon the societies, under the sanction of Mr. Wesley's name.

I shall suspend the publishing of my piece, to allow you a reasonable time to reply. You will have the goodness to favor me with an answer before the expiration of the next month.

I remain, Rev'd. Sir, your brother and fellow labourer in the Lord,

ALEXANDER M'CAINE.

N. B. I send a copy of this letter to each of your colleagues,

A. M'C.

No. II.

Baltimore, Sept. 25th, 1826.

REV'D. SIR :—The general conference of 1844, having, in their circular, denied the right of local ministers and lay members, to be represented in that body ; and having, moreover, intimated their determination to preserve, to the travelling preachers for ever, the the exclusive “ authority to make rules and regulations for the church,” it is, in my opinion a matter of great importance, in view of the discussion growing out of this subject to ascertain how the travelling preachers became possessed of this “ authority.” This inquiry carries me back to the origin of our church government, an account of which is published in the minutes of conference for 1785, and in the Book of Discipline, chap. 1. sec. 1. In this account, I find it asserted, that the conference “ following the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the episcopal mode of church government, thought it best to become an episcopal church.” This statement I have compared with the document on which it is professedly founded, (see minutes of conference for 1785) and cannot perceive in it any “ counsel” or “ recommendation” to adopt the episcopal mode of church government in “ preference to any other.” And, as I have not been able to perceive either in the document above alluded to, or in any part of Mr. Wesley’s writings, any recommendation to adopt the aforesaid form of government, it has occurred to me, that as you are among the oldest preachers now living, and as you are supposed to have a knowledge of our church affairs at that early day, you may be able to give some information upon this subject. Permit me, then, to ask you, if you have ever seen any document or letter, in which Mr. Wesley *explicitly* “ recommended,” to the Methodist societies in these United States, the episcopal form of church government? If you have seen such a document can a copy of it be procured.

2. Have you ever read Mr. Wesley’s *original manuscript* letter dated Sept 10, 1784, an extract of which is given as the sole authority for the adoption of our present form of church government?

3. Have you ever seen any letter or paper in which Mr. Wesley gave any “ counsel” or advice to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury or any other person to ordain a third order of ministers in our church, meaning, by that phrase, an order of bishops distinct from and superior to an order of presbyters? If so, can you tell if that paper can be produced?

4. Are you able to inform me in what year Mr. Wesley’s name was left out of the minutes? At what conference was the vote taken? By whom was it done? And for what reasons?

That you may have a full understanding of the importance which I attach to this investigation, it may be proper to state to you, that I have prepared an essay for the press, which, in my opinion will have some bearing upon the *episcopal office* in our church. And as my sole object is to obtain information, I would be extremely

thankful to you, if you could give me such information as would serve to correct the conclusions, (if they be erroneous) to which I have been conducted by the perusal of those documents to which I have had access. And, before I close, it may not be amiss to remark, that if the liberty I have taken, in making these inquiries, be considered by you an improper one, I hope you will ascribe it to a good motive; for it is truly my wish to obtain all possible information, before I give my essay to the public.

With sentiments of respect, I remain yours, in the gospel,

ALEXANDER M'CAINE.

The above letter was addressed to the following brethren, who were members of the conference in 1784. The Rev'd. Freeborn Garrettson, Rev'd. Lemuel Green, Rev'd. Thomas Ware, Rev'd. Nelson Reed, Rev'd. William Watters, and Rev'd. Edward Dromgoole.



No. III.

Jan. 15th. 1827.

My kind and respected friend,

In perusing that very valuable and useful publication, "the Mutual Rights," for this month, I observe there is reference to a funeral sermon preached by Dr. Coke in Baltimore, on a Sunday evening, on the death of Rev'd. John Wesley. The text was "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." I was present and heard that discourse; and I could confirm all that your correspondent "Dissenter" has stated. And farther, I can say Dr. Coke called it an almost diabolical act, namely, the expunging of Mr. Wesley's name from the American minutes. He said that no history furnished any parallel to it—that a body of Christian ministers should treat an aged and faithful minister, as Mr. Wesley undoubtedly was, with such disrespect, &c. &c.

I recollect observing at the time, that my friend Dr. Coke was planting thorns for himself; and so it was, for he was left to get into the mail coach next morning by himself; and meeting Mr. Asbury somewhere near Philadelphia, I was told they were very cool and shy towards each other. You know that Dr. Coke was one of Mr. Wesley's executors, and that he was straining every nerve to get to England as quick as possible.

When Dr. Coke got to London, he printed the sermon referred to above. It was the same text; but he omitted all the reflections he made in Baltimore respecting leaving Mr. Wesley's name off the American minutes.

I would also observe to you, that Mr. Vasey and Dr. Coke had very sharp words at the conference in 1784. This was talked of by the preachers: but on what they disputed, I am not at all able to say.

I am, &c.

Another says "Dr. Coke preached a funeral sermon in Baltimore on the death of Mr. Wesley; in which he inveighed against those preachers who excommunicated Mr. Wesley from the American connexion in the year 1787. Respecting this act, the Doctor says, "I doubt much, whether the cruel usage he received in Baltimore, in 1787, when he was excommunicated (wonderful and most unparalled step!) did not hasten his death. Indeed I little doubt it. For, from the time he was informed of it, he began to hang down his head, and to think he had lived long enough."







